Palacios authorizes admin leave from Dec. 24 to 26. PAGE 2
Honoring Corp. Crnkovic and The Battle of Saipan. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

1 DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

$1

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 256

www.saipantribune.com | TUESDAY DECEMBER 24, 2024 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

SMA airs concerns about MACS' QC

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Christian

Although pending approval by Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Star Marianas Air, Inc. has some concerns regarding the qualifying certificate that the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority has granted J&P Holdings LLC for the establishment of new inter-island air service Micronesian Air Connection Services.

See SMA on Page 4

Saipan Chamber of Commerce honors Kilili

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce held a small ceremony to honor Delegate

See CHAMBER on Page 4

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
The Saipan Chamber of Commerce held a small gathering in honor of Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) at their office at the Marianas Business Plaza yesterday.

NMTech graduates 104 students

NMTECH
A total of 104 students graduated from the Northern Marianas Technical Institute last Thursday at the Garapan Roundhouse.

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Celebratory applause and shouts filled the air as one of the largest groups of Northern Marianas Technical Institute graduates were recognized last Thursday at the Garapan Roundhouse.

With graduates from

See NMTECH on Page 4

OPA issues opinion on gov't agency buying items from employee's private business

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
delatorreferdie@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

The Office of the Public Auditor has issued an advisory opinion on whether a CNMI government agency could procure necessary items from an employee's private business.

OPA legal counsel Joseph Przyuski, in a recent advisory opinion, pointed out that the government agency must ensure that its conflicted

See OPA on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS
For small businesses, the biggest change in the new year will be the arrival of a presumably more business-friendly administration in Washington. But there are other shifts owners should keep on their radar.

PAGE 9

CHRISTMAS 2024
The holidays are meant to be a time of celebration with family and friends. But they can also bring pressure to spend money on gifts, gatherings and plane tickets home, exacerbated by brand emails, social media influencers and family expectations.

PAGE 10

LIFE & STYLE
In the holiday season battle of big-budget family movies, Paramount Pictures' "Sonic the Hedgehog 3" sped past the Walt Disney Co.'s "Mufasa: The Lion King" to take the top spot at the box office ahead of the lucrative Christmas corridor in theaters.

PAGE 11

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Wishing you a holiday season
brimming with joy and a
New Year filled with hope.
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
©2024 McDonald's. While supplies last
From management and staff at McDonald's of Saipan
STORE HOURS
CHALAN PALE ARNOLD ROAD:
Open Daily for Dine In & Drive-Thru
6AM-10PM | (670) 235-8577
GARAPAN EXPRESS:
Open Daily for Dine-In & Drive-Thru
24 Hours | (670) 233-8577

Local

Palacios authorizes admin leave from Dec. 24 to 26

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios has authorized an extended administrative leave for government employees in the spirit of the holiday season.

Yesterday, Palacios sent out a memorandum to all department heads informing them that he has extended administrative for all non-essential government employees in the spirit of the holidays.

"In the spirit of the holiday season, we are hereby authorizing non-essential employees of the commonwealth government's executive branch administrative leave on Tuesday, Dec. 24, at 12pm and on Thursday Dec. 26," said the memorandum.

Palacios said the gesture is a token of the administration's gratitude for all hard-working government employees.

"As we approach the holiday season, we want to take a moment to express our gratitude for your hard work and dedication throughout the year. We thank you for your commitment, service and contribution to the Commonwealth," he said.

Palacios and Lt. Gov. David Apatang, in closing, greets all employees a happy holiday season.

"The lieutenant governor

See LEAVE on Page 4

NMPASI releases holiday schedule

The Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc office will be closed tomorrow, Dec. 25, 2024 in observance of Christmas Day. Office hours will resume on Thursday, Dec. 26, 2024, from 8am to 11am.

The NMPASI office will be closed from 11am to 5pm on Thursday, Dec. 26, 2024, and closed all day on Friday, Dec. 27, 2024 for professional development. Regular office hours will resume on Monday, Dec. 30, 2024. ***(PR)***

This holiday season, we at TakeCare want to express our heartfelt gratitude for the trust you place in us to care for your health and well-being. Your confidence drives us to deliver quality health care and access to a wide network of dedicated doctors and providers.
As we celebrate the spirit of Christmas, we wish you and your loved ones a season filled with joy, peace, and good health. Thank you for being an invaluable part of the TakeCare family.
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
from all of us at TakeCare!
TakeCare℠
A TanHoldings Company
Customer Service (670) 235-0994/0991/0990 • takecareasia.com • Connect with us
Our Island, Your Health Plan™

A LETTER FROM THE FRONT

Honoring Corp. Crnkovic and The Battle of Saipan

By WALT GOODRIDGE
Special to Saipan Tribune

Among the sea of names that adorn war memorials around the world are men, women, and children whose lives were tragically cut short. Footnoted in the annals of history and often forgotten by the passage of time are the personalities, dreams, goals, and accomplishments that defined these individuals and that impacted those who knew them

In many cases, soldiers joined or were recruited at a young age and never had the opportunity to create their own legacies—direct descendants who might fondly recall their personalities, continue those dreams, achieve those goals, and benefit from those accomplishments. History is replete with battles that ended such possibilities.

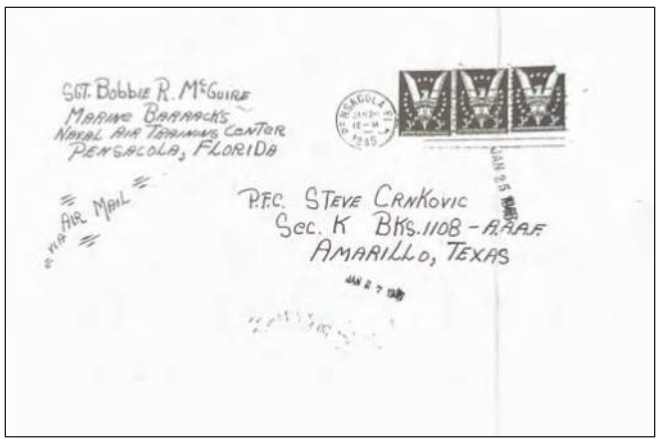
World War II's Battle of Saipan was one of many such conflicts. From June 15 to July 9, 1944, the U.S. invasion, beach landings, and ultimate capture of the Japanese island of Saipan took place. The United States suffered losses of approximately 3,000 killed and 13,000 wounded. Over 929 Chamorros and Carolinians died as a result of the war, along with more than 8,500 Japanese, Korean, and Okinawan civilians, and approximately 29,000 military personnel. [Exact numbers vary by source; research is ongoing.]

Among those killed in battle on the U.S. side was Corporal Joseph "Joe" Matthews Crnkovic[1] (pronounced sank'-o-vick) of the 2nd Marine Division (E Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines; E/2/8) from Louisiana, who lost his life at the age of 21. The number of those who knew him directly during that time were likely very small.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Corp. Joseph Matthews Crnkovic's enlistment photo.

Two generations later, however, Griffin Sava, Joe's grandnephew (the grandson of Joe's youngest sister, Lois), would make it his mission to serve as the keeper of the family history and bring Joe's life to awareness.

On a recent pilgrimage to the CNMI, Griffin and his father, Ken, toured Saipan and Tinian—visiting the landing beaches, structures, relics, and memorials that these islands host. Griffin shared with me the following—a letter postmarked 1945 from Sgt. Bobbie McGuire. The letter, written after an initial communication with Joe's mother is addressed to Joe's younger brother, Steve Crnkovic, and recounts McGuire's recollection of meeting Joe between campaigns, the battle itself, and Joe's final moments.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Image of the envelope from Bobbie McGuire, postmarked Jan. 25, 1945.

Naval Air Training Center,
Pensacola, Florida
Marines Barracks
U.S. Naval Air Station
Pensacola, Fla.

Steve,

Yes, I know a bit more about Joe than I told your mother. I couldn't exactly tell her how he died. You want the story, here you go.

Joe joined our outfit in New Zealand, where we were resting after [the Battle of] Guadalcanal. We were just plain infantry. At Tarawa, we landed in LVTs (amphibious assault vehicles). Joe was in my amtrack (amphibious tractor). I was a CPL [corporal] then. He sure was a darn swell guy in action and brave as hell. We stayed there three days, on the second I was hit and evacuated, but I do know he got quite a few Japs. From there, they

See CRNKOVIC on Page 5

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Ken, left, and Griffin Sava at Saipan's American Memorial Park's Court of Honor, viewing the names of the 5,204 U.S. servicemen who died in the Battles of Saipan, Tinian, and the Philippine Sea. Since the memorial's construction, additional names have been submitted. Research is ongoing to include names not currently listed.

Josephine Olopai Towai Rabauliman
Administratrix
P.O. Box 501624 CK
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. (670) 838-0352
Email: ofing1670@gmail.com
Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF:	]	Civil Action No. 24-0207
SOPHIA OLOPAI TOWAI	]	**Notice of Hearing on Petition for Decree of Final Distribution**
Deceased/Decedent.	]	
	]	**Date: January 16, 2025**
	]	**Time: 10:00 a.m.**
	]	**Judge Joseph N. Camacho**
	]	

NOTICE IF HEREBY GIVEN that Administratrix for the Estate of Sophia Olopai Towai, Josephine Olopai Towai Rabauliman, has petitioned and moved the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to issue a Decree of Final Distribution in the above captioned Estate. The hearing on the Administratrix's request is scheduled to be heard on the date and time set forth above at the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All interested person or entity making known creditor claim filed within the sixty (60) day period of publication of notice to creditors in this probate action in the Estate of Sophia Olopai Towai may appear at this hearing.

Dated this 20th day of December, 2024.

/s/_____
Clerk of Court

FREE ENTRY!
2025
MARIANAS BEACH RESORT (FORMERLY HYATT)
SPECIAL OFFER
THE LARGEST FIREWORKS DISPLAY IN SAIPAN!
INQUIRY: 670-234-1234
FOR MORE FUN, GET YOUR BEER BUCKET AND KEEP THE FUN FLOWING!
OFFER #1 BEER BUCKET
BENEFIT 1. ENJOY 5 CANS OF BEER FOR JUST $20!
$20 PER BUCKET
FOR EXTRA FUN, GET YOUR TABLE FENCED WITH PRIVATE BAR!
OFFER #2 VIP TABLE
BENEFIT 1. MAXIMUM "6" GUESTS PER TABLE
BENEFIT 2. INCLUDE 1 BOTTLE OF SPARKLING WINE, 6 BEERS, 4 SODAS, 2 BOTTLES OF WATER
$150 PER TABLE
FOR EXTREAM FUN, GET YOUR ROOM FOR STAYOVER!
OFFER #3 STAYCATION (12/30 & 31 CHECK IN ONLY)
BENEFIT 1. ADD $10 FOR BREAKFAST FOR 2 GUESTS!
BENEFIT 2. ADD $10 FOR COCKTAIL HOURS FOR 2 GUESTS!
START FROM $99 + 15% TAX

NMTECH

From page 1

NMTech's construction core, electrical, carpentry, automotive, culinary arts, and baking and pastry courses, this year's award ceremony was especially exciting as the institute graduated their first two cohorts from their cosmetology course, bringing the number of graduates up to 104, one of the biggest groups since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along with their celebrations, students shared how grateful they were for the opportunity NMTech provided.

"They really gave us a transition into the working place right after studying there," said baking and pastry graduate Bristhy Hossain. "They gave us an internship so I'm going to be working with Pacific Islands Club Saipan, hopefully."

To NMTech and her instructors, she said, "Thank you, thank you so much. It wasn't only a good time, I really enjoyed everything."

Another graduate in the baking and pastry cohort, Corina Aldan, also shared what stuck out to her was, "it wasn't just about how much we learned, but it was also fun. That's why it made us want to come back every day. I actually still want to go back, I'm happy it was a good experience and I think everyone should give it a shot because not only can you better your career path, but you learn so much in the process. So, for my internship, I took it at PIC. I see myself there in the future." To her instructors and fellow graduates, she exclaimed, "We did it! "

NMTech program coordinator Aaron Tomokane shared with *Saipan Tribune*, "Our biggest deal right here in the CNMI is increasing our workforce."

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

Rotary holds Winter Wonderland Christmas party

By RACQUEL H. FLOYD
raxfloyd@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

With the goal of celebrating achievements, strengthening friendships, and highlighting the collective power to transform lives and communities, the Rotary Club of Saipan held its Christmas Party with a Winter Wonderland theme last Dec. 10 at the Queen's Hall of Kensington Hotel.

The event was attended by the Rotarians, Rotaract, Interact, and Miss Northern Marianas Earth 2024 Heavenly Divine Aldan Pangelinan.

Rotary Club of Saipan president Joann Aquino explained the theme of their event in her welcome remarks.

"Tonight, as we gather under this Winter Wonderland Christmas celebration, I'm reminded of why this year's theme, 'The Magic of Rotary,' resonates so deeply with our club here on Saipan. The magic isn't just in the festivities we see around us it's in countless ways we've come together as Rotarians to serve our community and make a difference in the lives of others," she said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

Saipan Tribune won't have any issue on Dec. 25, 2024. Publication returns on Dec. 26. Merry Christmas!

OPA

From page 1

employee is removed entirely from any role in the decision-making process with respect to procuring anything from the affiliated private company to comply with the CNMI Ethics Code.

Przyuski issued the advisory opinion after receiving an inquiry about the issue from a Commonwealth government agency. He did not disclose the identity of the requesting agency and that of others involved.

Temporary public auditor Dora I. Deleon Guerrero reviewed the opinion.

Przyuski said one of the purposes of the Ethics Code is to ensure that decisions of public agencies and agents are free of perceived conflicts of interest, as well as actual conflicts of interest.

He said Section 8532 (a) of the Ethics Code prohibits a public official or public employee from using his or her position for personal gain. The legal counsel said it provides that "[a] public official or public employee shall not use or attempt to use the public position to obtain private financial gain, contract, employment, license, or other personal or private advantage, direct or indirect, for the public official or public employee, for a relative, or for any entity in which the public official or employee has a present or potential economic interest."

Przyuski noted that public policies underlying the Ethics Code include developing public confidence in individual holding public office, enhancing the dignity of public offices, and assuring the community that public officials are free of the influence of undisclosed private or business interests in their official acts.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

CHAMBER

From page 1

Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) for all the ways he helped the CNMI's business community.

Sablan, who held the NMI delegate seat for 16 years, had a hand in the development of the CNMI's business community as we know it today said Chamber president Joe C. Guerrero. That is why the Chamber found it only fitting to honor him for his contributions through a special ceremony yesterday.

During the ceremony, Chamber members presented Sablan with a plaque as a symbol of the Chamber's gratitude for Sablan's service.

"Being our first delegate, this is the first time the Chamber has been given the opportunity to honor an outgoing NMI delegate whom we worked with on many key issues that businesses were confronting. It's a way we are able to show our appreciation," he said.

When asked what Sablan's most notable contributions to the business community were, Guerrero said nearly everything.

"There's so many. If you just look around, much of what the CNMI has, he has touched in one way or another so the business community and the entire community appreciates that," he said.

Specifically, though, the most notable was the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker Program.

"For many years, the CNMI's labor visa situation, specifically the CWs, the Chamber worked closely with his office to get that to what it is now and to get that 10-year extension six years ago. The CW-1 program, without his office's help, we would not have the program that we have now among other things, aid for small businesses. He was instrumental in ensuring that the small business administration was active in this area. A lot of the educational institutions that businesses benefit from," he said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

As we celebrate this special time of year, we would like to extend our warmest wishes to you and your loved ones. May this Christmas bring you happiness, peace, and memorable moments with family and friends.
Merry Christmas
From the management & staff of
LP GAS
Since1983
WUSHIN
Committed to Safety Excellence
Lower Base, P.O. Box 500440
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: 322-7415 • 322-8733
Fax: 322-7414
email: wushin2@pticom.com

SMA

From page 1

Yesterday, in a statement to the media, Star Marianas raised some concerns about CEDA's decision to approve a 22-year tax exemption for J&P Holdings LLC under the qualifying certificate program.

According to Star Marianas, comparing MACS to the controversial Marianas Southern Airways, it is concerned that the new airline service is "seeking substantial government subsidy as a precondition to enter the market."

"This follows a troubling pattern where new entrants into the CNMI aviation market, including both MACS (Szabo Aerospace) and the now-defunct Marianas Southern Airways, have sought substantial government subsidies as a precondition to entering the market. It raises the question: if Star Marianas has provided sufficient, reliable, and unsubsidized air service to the CNMI for over 15 years, why must new entrants rely on local government sponsored economic advantages to 'compete' with Star Marianas?" said Star Marianas.

CEDA, in a previous board meeting, stated that its qualifying certificate program is open to all businesses interested in applying. Qualifying certificates have been granted to several other companies in the past like the 25-year, 100% tax abatement QC granted to Bridge Capital LLC back in 2006 and many others.

This essentially means Star Marianas is welcome to apply for a QC as well.

Star Marianas further states in its comments to the media that "political motivations to undermine its operations" date back to the prior administration, which Star claims initiated unfounded claims that it was not paying airport fees, and arbitrarily increased airport charges after over-collecting Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs) without fulfilling its obligations as an airport sponsor.

"If Star Marianas was truly non-compliant with legitimate airport fees, regulatory bodies such as the U.S. Department of Transportation or the Department of Defense—under which Star Marianas holds a designation as a compliant air carrier—would have ample reason to revoke Star Marianas' operating authority. Yet no such action has occurred, further invalidating these claims. Instead, the CNMI government and CPA appear intent on undermining Star Marianas' operation by favoring airlines like Marianas Southern Airways and MACS through government-backed subsidies designed to cannibalize passengers from Star Marianas and force it out of the market," said Star Marianas

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

LEAVE

From page 2

and I along with our families wish you all a joyous and festive holiday filled with peace and cherished moments. May the new year bring health, happiness, and continued success," said the memorandum.

In related news, Senate President Edith DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) also wishes the community a happy holiday season.

"May the holiday season bring warmth and happiness to you and your families and renewed strength for the new year, with best wishes from the Office of the Senate President," she said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

During their pilgrimage, Griffin and Ken Sava discover the beauty and culture of the island with the author.

CRNKOVIC

From page 3

went to Hawaii. I came out of the hospital and rejoined them. We were replaced for the many men we lost and began training. We were fixed into rifle squads of 13 men, a Sgt. in charge, then three group leaders and CPLs, each having three men, each forming a combat team.

On May 15th, we boarded an L.S.T. [Landing Ship Tank] and started for Saipan, enroute we made practice landings. On June 15th we once more went in the first wave of the assault. Sgt. Shulko as squad leader, Joe in charge of first group, Cpl. Kreiner had the 2nd, and I the 3rd. Upon hitting the beach we were under artillery fire from the hills, also heavy mortar fire. We began moving up, our squad got separated, but later we found our way back. Later, after heavy fighting, we moved through the town of Garapan. We killed an estimated 500 Japs with the loss of Cpl. Kreiner, and two others in our squad. It was late one night, about three o'clock Joe and I combined our men as the left was wounded, and dug foxholes in a circular formation, keeping two men on watch at all times. The whole regiment was spread out on the front. What few was left. A counter-attack started and we opened fire. Our company took the brunt of the attack. They got too damn close and we started using bayonets. I seen Joe get four, as he was next to me. Joe was hit already, in the shoulder but kept fighting. I don't know how many more Japs he got, then I caught a bayonet in my leg. When we beat them off, Joe had caught a dum dum² in the stomach, medical aid couldn't do him any good. He died five minutes or so lat-

See CRNKOVIC on Page 8

May this special season bring you joy, peace,
and a well-deserved break to relax and spend
quality time with your loved ones.
Merry Christmas
From the management and staff of
CIC
Century Insurance Co., Ltd.
A TanHoldings Company
JP Center Ground Floor,
Beach Road, Garapan Office
Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m
www.centuryinsurancegroup.net
Guam +1(671) 648-0609
Saipan +1(670) 234-0609

As the year comes to a close and we celebrate the holiday season, we want to take a moment to thank you for being a part of our journey. Your support means the world to us. May your Christmas be filled with warmth, your days with joy, and your heart with love.
Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year!
Middle Road, Gualo Rai
Tel. (670) 235-8640
Beach Road, San Jose
Tel. (670) 234-6420
J.E.T. HOLDINGS COMPANY
DBA'S SAIPAN BOWLING CENTER • COMMERCIAL BUILDING & HOUSE RENTAL • CONSULTING SERVICES & RENTAL ESTATES
J'S RESTAURANT I-SAN JOSE • J'S RESTAURANT II-GUALO RAI
P.O. BOX 29, SAIPAN MP 96950 • TEL. (670) 235-8641 • FAX (670) 235-9033
Blossoms Floral Depot
Unlimited expressions for lasting impression
Fresh / Silk Flower Arrangements & Baskets, Funeral Services,
Wedding Services, Consultations / Coordinating / Planning for any occasions.
Please visit Blossoms Floral Shop or call (670) 235-7372/235-2276

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 256
Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950
Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
MEMBER
The Associated Press
Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Trump is guilty and not immune—His Stormy Daniels hush money conviction remains

Even a terribly wrong-headed decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on a president's post-White House criminal immunity can't undo Donald Trump's 34 felony convictions correctly ruled Acting Manhattan state Supreme Court Justice Juan Merchan.

You remember Merchan, who oversaw Trump's Stormy Daniels hush money trial downtown in the spring that ended on May 30 with 34 guilty verdicts.

On Monday, Merchan said no to Trump, who's been seeking to wriggle out of his Manhattan conviction ever since the jury rendered their unanimous finding.

After Chief Justice John Roberts and five of his colleagues issued their decision on July 1 related to Special Counsel Jack Smith's prosecution of Trump for trying to overturn the 2020 election, that "with respect to the president's exercise of his core constitutional powers, this immunity must be absolute," Trump has been attempting to shoehorn the embarrassing and tawdry (and criminal) Stormy situation into that definition.

Well, no, since none of the players in the scheme, Trump, Daniels, Michael Cohen or David Pecker were government employees at the time of the offense when Trump illegally doctored his company's ledgers to hide $130,000 paid to Daniels to buy her silence about a 2006 tryst with Trump. And after Trump was sworn in, Daniels, Cohen and Pecker remained on the outside.

Robert wrote: "When may a former president be prosecuted for official acts taken during his presidency?," But Merchan had to consider: "Is a president's in-office conduct to conceal payments to an adult film actress to keep information from the public eye relating to an encounter that occurred prior to his presidency official or unofficial"

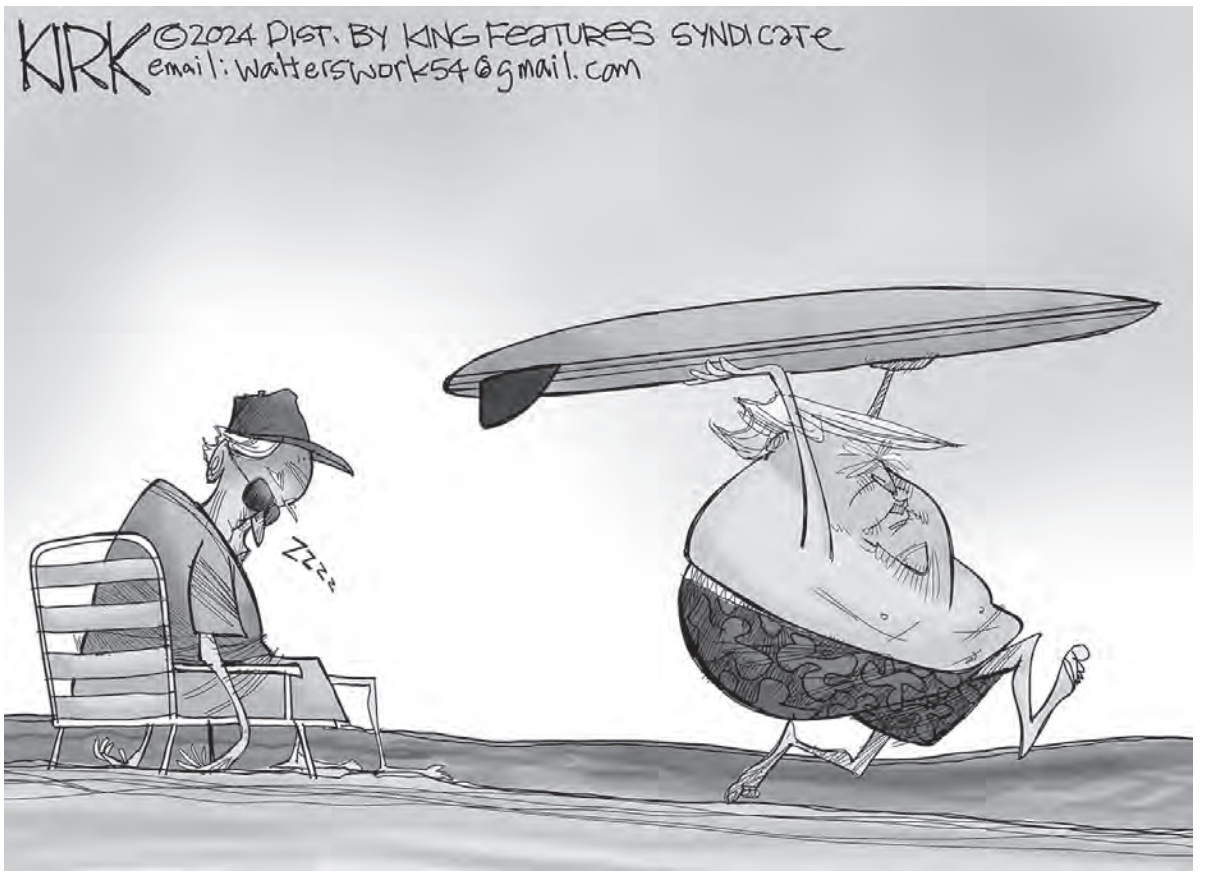
Forget a president's "core constitutional powers," this payoff to a porn star while a candidate and private citizen wasn't even anywhere near the "outer perimeter" of a president's official responsibility that Roberts expounded on.

When the high court ruled, those elements in the Smith prosecution of what Trump did from Election Day 2020 until Jan. 6 that were as part of his Oval Office duties, such as conferring with the Department of Justice, were deemed covered by immunity and had to be excluded from the case. But Trump's other, private, acts were not immune.

In the Daniels case, it's much simpler, as the crime happened before Trump took office on Jan. 20, 2017. The only possible immunity could be President Trump's interactions with White House staff such as aides Hope Hicks and Madeleine Westerhout, who both testified at the criminal trial.

Merchan ruled that excluding any elements of the prose-

See TRUMP on Page 7



The latest evidence that putting RFK Jr. in charge of public health would be a disaster

By ROBIN ABCARIAN
Los Angeles Times

Polio came for 5-year-old Lynn Lane when she was visiting her grandmother in rural Indiana. Suddenly, her arms and legs became weak, and by the time she got to a hospital in Indianapolis, she was totally paralyzed and in respiratory failure. Lane spent the next several months in an iron lung.

"I don't really remember too much about that," Lane, now 73, told me Monday from her home north of Sacramento. "The only memories I really have are mainly at night. You could hear the swooshing of all the iron lungs."

Lane's family moved to Northern California a few years after her bout with polio, when she was 8. "That's when I started noticing I was different than other kids," she said. "I was in leg braces and had to learn to walk all over again."

Her parents took her to Shriners Hospital in San Francisco, where she lived on and off for the next eight years.

"It was kind of like a boarding school, except with surgeries," Lane said. "They did all these muscle and tendon transfers. I think I had maybe 15 to 18 surgeries. They transferred my quads from the front to the back so I could stand."

In her early 40s, Lane was diagnosed with post-polio syndrome, which afflicts between 25% and 40% of childhood polio survivors. It is similar to chronic fatigue syndrome and can range from mild to debilitating.

"I'm not in a wheelchair yet," said Lane, who uses leg braces and crutches, "but it's heading that way."

The idea that anyone would question the polio vaccine now, she said, "makes me nuts."

Last week, the New York Times reported that in 2022, Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s attorney and close advisor Aaron Siri had petitioned the Food and Drug Administration to revoke approval of the polio vaccine in use for the last three decades until its safety can be studied further against an unvaccinated control group.

Kennedy, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Health and Human Services secretary, is a longtime vaccine skeptic who spouts nonsense about the safety and efficacy of vaccines and a lot of other things. He is, in the view of many medical professionals, a danger to public health.

The Times' report set off shock waves. Before Jonas Salk developed the first successful polio vaccine in the mid-1950s, the disease killed or paralyzed more than half a million people around the world each year. Many high-profile Americans who suffered from childhood polio, including Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell and the actor Mia Farrow, immediately condemned the questioning of the vaccine. Kennedy and Trump were forced to reassure Americans that they support the lifesaving treatment.

As Kennedy met with Republican senators to shore up support for his nomination this week, he told reporters that he is "all for" the polio vaccine. Trump, in his first post-election press conference, insisted, "You're not going to lose the polio vaccine. It's not going to happen."

And yet Trump also persisted in promulgating the oft-debunked lie that childhood vaccines are linked to autism, vowing to "look into" the conspiracy theory. Kennedy, he said, will "come back with a report as to what he thinks. We're going to find out a lot."

This fear-mongering is unconscionable. We already know a lot. In fact, we know more than a lot.

The autism question has "been studied to death in some ways," said Richard Pan, a pediatrician and former California state senator who led the successful 2015 campaign to eliminate a "personal belief" exemption from vaccine requirements for the state's schoolchildren.

"Do we know what causes autism? Not yet," Pan said. But, he added, we do know what does not cause autism: the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, which was implicated in a long-since-discredited 1998 paper based on 12 cases by the defrocked English physician Andrew Wakefield.

"What will it take to convince Trump and RFK Jr. that a retracted 12-subject study with fake data was actually wrong?" asked Pan.

In any case, he added, blaming the vaccine is an "ableist" response to autism by some parents. "They don't want to accept that their child is neurodivergent," Pan said. "You want to say your child is broken and my life has been ruined and it's the fault of Big Pharma or whoever."

People who do not vaccinate their children, he said, are risking the health of the very people they are supposed to protect.

"You are playing with your children's lives," he said. "All of these adults have already been vaccinated."

See LATEST on Page 7

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

History will be kinder to Joe Biden than the pollsters

Now that pollsters are declaring President Joe Biden a "failure," historians will reckon with too many economic signals rendering the prevailing narrative little more than media noise.

From the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 that ushered in the longest period of unemployment below 4% since the 1960s to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 that paved the way for road and bridge building, and from the Chips and Science Act of 2022 that sparked the biggest manufacturing construction boom the country has ever seen to 2022's Inflation Reduction Act that has led to many tens of billions of investment in new technologies that are already leading to new sources of climate-friendly energy, history will show that the 46th president laid the groundwork for U.S. exceptionalism lasting many years, perhaps even decades, after his administration has long ended.

This is why the U.S. economy is growing faster than any developed country as measured by the International Monetary Fund. It's why America has been able to avoid a recession that so many pundits said would be inevitable by now. It's why the U.S. stock market is the envy of the world, soaring 58% percent under Biden's watch, compared with just 2.5% for everyone else as measured by the MSCI indexes. Were he still around, economist John Maynard Keynes would surely call the performance of equities a psychological referendum on Biden's policies.

No U.S. president in the last half century comes close to replicating Biden's superior score among most of the 15 measures of relative prosperity weighted equally, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The 2.9% annual increase in nonfarm payrolls, 7.9% nominal rate of annualized GDP growth, 14.1% increase in homeowners equity, 5.1% surge in average hourly earnings and the dollar's 19% appreciation against a basket of major currencies are just some of the metrics that make Biden the uncontested economic leader.

What makes this performance all the more remarkable is that Biden inherited the once-in-a-century COVID-19 pandemic that led to a catastrophic 1.12 million deaths in the U.S. alone from his predecessor, President-elect Donald Trump. Remember that at the time of the 2020 election, a recovery from both the pandemic and the worst recession since the Great Depression presided over by Trump was still in doubt. Biden then delivered what had been largely missing for the previous two decades: fiscal stimulus.

"If you look at the economy" before the pandemic "it was very low growth for 20 years," JPMorgan Chase & Co. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jamie Dimon told the Economic Club of New York in April. "But if you look at the economy since then, it's been booming." (It was the first time in his career as the CEO of the No. 1 bank that Dimon used the word "booming" to describe the U.S.) "The American consumer, even if we go into a recession, is much wealthier than before," he added. "Debt service ratios are very low...their home prices are up; their stock prices are up."

Dimon should know because JPMorgan is one of 16-based U.S. companies that make up the 20 most valuable in the world by stock market value, with most of their superior valuations occurring during the past three years, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Investors are gladly paying a record 28% average premium to own American stocks, more than twice what they paid under Trump.

Contrary to popular opinion, the Biden economy benefitted a wider swath of Americans. The poverty rate fell to 11.1%, the second lowest in data going back to 1973, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Also, the Gini Index of Income Inequality declined for two straight years, the first time that has happened since the early 1970s. Under Biden, household net worth has surged by an unprecedented $32.1 trillion through mid-2024. Americans are spending less than 10% of their incomes servicing debt, a record low in data going back to 1980 and excluding the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 when many payments were put on hold.

The problem for Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris was that all of these accomplishments were overshadowed by the sudden scourge of inflation due mostly, according to researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and elsewhere, to the pandemic-era disruption to the global supply chain under Trump, and a housing market that effectively "trapped" millions of Americans in place.

By MATTHEW A. WINKLER
Bloomberg Opinion

Matthew A. Winkler, editor in chief emeritus of Bloomberg News, writes about markets.

Inflation is the more complicated story because although the rate of increase in the cost of goods and services has been tamed, as seen in the collapse in the Consumer Price Index from 9.1% in mid-2022 to the recent 2.7%, which is where it was under Trump, overall prices are higher. While wages have been rising faster than inflation since mid-2023, helping to explain why consumer spending has exceeded forecasts, it's clear that the two years prior when earnings growth lagged behind inflation still weighs on the minds of voters. Never mind that inflation rates in the U.S. have come down much faster and farther than just about anywhere else in the developed world.

It's also clear that Americans feel like the housing market is somehow "broken" despite the rising home prices referenced by Dimon and big gains in homeowners equity. The problem here is that in order to help get inflation under control, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate from near zero in early 2022 to as high as 5.5% last year. This led to a rise in 30-year mortgages from 3.25% to more than 7%. Existing home sales fell to levels last seen during the financial crisis as housing affordability measured by the National Association of Realtors collapsed. In effect, those who want to buy a home largely can't and those who already own a home don't want to sell and give up their low mortgage rates.

There is light at the end of the housing tunnel. With inflation subsiding, the Fed has started to lower its target for the federal funds rate, and the cost of financing a home is starting to drop as well. A Mortgage Bankers Association index tracking loan applications to purchase a home just posted its biggest two-week increase since January 2023.

Unfortunately for Biden and Harris, little of this context was shared with readers, listeners or viewers by corporate or social media. On the contrary, many disingenuous media overwhelmed the favorable outlook with misinformation that continues unabated from domestic and foreign perpetrators. It may not have mattered anyway. In many ways, Biden and Harris are victims of circumstances. Incumbents around the world are being ousted in elections by voters still scarred by the pandemic and looking to assign blame.

Like Biden, Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson were former vice presidents who also shared much greater disapproval than approval from voters during their waning days in the White House. Only much later did Truman and Johnson garner a much greater appreciation for their handling of the economy. It's likely to be the same with Biden.

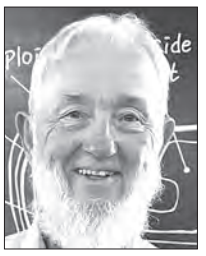
With assistance from Shin Pei.

Between the Immensities: Nostalgic Nöel News

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey Connolly aka "Pepe Batbon" is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is the Poet Laureate of Tinian and enjoys stargazing.



14 Happy Holiday Haiku

(Written 12/12/2012, revised 12/12/2024)

1. Who knows what awaits/joyous festive times/12 days of Xmas
2. Turkey in the thaw/great smell in kitchens/first days in Xmas
3. Mint ribbon candy/canes big and small on the tree/sweet smiles
4. Eggnog with rum/chocolate chip cookies/hide that fruitcake
5. Carolers outside/singing songs eating snow/old songs at Xmas
6. Tree top angel light/blows her trumpet all day/and all night long
7. Deacon John Moore/ jumps the blues on DVD/Mary bakes pies
8. Old spool ornaments/ blue plastic bulbs/a fresh popcorn garland
9. Peanut brittle pan/used by the gingerbread man/ sweets of Xmas
10. Cut the tree outback/pricked fingers/smell those spruce needles
11. Candy canes galore/red and white stripes of goodness/ sold out
12. Three Kings/bring gifts to the Prince of Peace/ bring Peace today.
13. Potfabot, bring us some fina'mames, buñelos chotda yan dagu
14. Magof Ha'anen Krismas yan Biba Año Nuebu para hagu.

Explication: Haiku and senryu are three-line Japanese poems. Here a slash is used to differentiate the lines and save space. A sonnet usually has 14 lines with the last two lines being a rhyming couplet. I added a couplet to the 12 haiku/senryu to make this a Christmas sonnet. I use a short word for Christmas "Xmas" to save space, but I don't like it. Most of the images used here are factual from when I was growing up. Deacon John Moore, my brother-in-law, is a Creole musician who has played at every NOLA Jazz and Heritage Fest since its inception. In the New Orleans Musicians Hall of Fame he has a DVD called Jump Blues. He's still performing by the way, now in his '80s. My Aunt Margaret use to make Xmas tree ornaments with old wooden spools which held thread. Us children loved making garlands for the tree with fresh popcorn. No one liked the canned fruit cake that neighbors passed on from house to house. We planted blue spruce trees in our backyard and harvested them for years. Lines 13 and 14 ask for pastries, fried banana and yam donuts, and a wish for a Happy Christmas and New Year for you in the Chamorro language.

LATEST

From page 6

Although polio has essentially been eradicated in the U.S., it still exists in parts of the world and could certainly make a comeback here if enough people refuse to vaccinate their children. In 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that an unvaccinated New York man had contracted polio. And earlier this year, amid Israel's war on Hamas, a 10-month-old child in Gaza contracted the virus, confirming fears about the war's potential effect on preventable childhood disease.

As for the Kennedy advisor's petition, Pan said, how could we withhold a potentially lifesaving treatment from children in a control group to test the efficacy of a vaccine that has been used successfully for decades?

"Sometimes a trial cannot be done safely or ethically, " he said. "Are you willing to volunteer your child into the control group?"

TRUMP

From page 6

cution case that could have been immune and therefore not allowed, which also included a government ethics form and some presidential Tweets, still left "overwhelming evidence of guilt." That some of the forbidden material was still heard by the jury was harmless error.

In other words, had Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg left out everything covered by immunity, there was still so much damning evidence remaining that the outcome would have been exactly the same: guilty.

©2024 New York Daily News.

MERRY CHRISTMAS
May the holiday season bring you closer to everyone you hold dear and fill your heart with love and happiness.
From the management and staff of
Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

CRNKOVIC

From page 5

er. And that's the story Steve as I seen it. I'm proud as hell to have fought with him. He died smiling.

I'm stationed 57 miles from home until June, then I'm going back over, and I'll help even the score for Joe and the many other close friends we lost.

I ask you not to let this get too far, as some of the information we aren't supposed to let out, you understand, as for type of ship and time of departure.

Write me again Steve, and good hunting to you,

Bob

I asked Griffin Sava about Bobbie's "Good hunting" closing. Griffin explained, "I believe he was referring to hunting the enemy. This was a common practice in the Pacific Theater. It was a much more brutal campaign than in Europe, and dehumanizing the enemy often made it easier for soldiers, sailors, and Marines to cope. Steve was in the Army Air Corps, and at the time of the letter (postmarked Jan 25, 1945), he was still stationed on the mainland U.S."

After the war, those who survived and knew the fallen provided a vital link between them and their families. This letter likely offered the closure that Joe's family was seeking after the loss of a brother and son.

Griffin is continuing his research through the National Archives and other sources. You may contact the family through Griffin at savagm18@gmail.com. For similar pilgrimages by the relatives of Battle of Saipan veterans and more photos and details of the Battle of Saipan from Griffin's research, see the "Saipan History, WWII & Culture" playlist on the Discover Saipan YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@discoversaipan and https://www.discoversaipan.com/blog.

[1]The Crnkovic family originated from Yugoslavia (now Croatia). Ed (Joe's father) moved to Louisiana, met his wife, and settled in Zwolle, Louisiana, near Shreveport.

[2]Joe had two brothers in the service: Steve, who served in the Army Air Corps, and Johnny, who was in the 65th Infantry Division, which broke through the Siegfried Line in Europe in 1945.

[3]A "dum dum" is a type of expanding bullet designed to increase in diameter and inflict a larger wound on impact. The term comes from Dum Dum, an Indian town near Kolkata, where the bullets were first manufactured.

Wishing you a Christmas filled with the magic and wonder of the holiday season. May your days be bright and your hearts be light. May the joy of Christmas stay with you throughout the year and bring you peace and happiness.
Happy Holidays!
From the staff and management
SAIPAN SHIPPING COMPANY
SINCE 1956
SAIPAN
Latitude 15° 12' N | Longitude 145° 45' E
SAIPAN SHIPPING COMPANY, INC.
TEL: 670-322-9706
FAX: 670-322-3183/1981
EMAIL: saiship@saipanshipping.com
www.saipanshipping.com
TINIAN
Latitude 15° | Longitude 145° 38' E
TINIAN MARINE STEVEDORE, INC.
TEL: 670-322-9240
FAX: 670-322-8568
EMAIL: saisteve@pticom.com
ROTA
Latitude 14° 10' N | Longitude 145° 15' E
ISLA SHIPPING, ROTA
TEL: 670-532-3117
FAX: 670-532-9888
EMAIL: islashipping@yahoo.com
GUAM
Latitude 13° 30' N | Longitude 144° 40' E
MARIANAS STEAMSHIP AGENCIES, INC.
TEL: 671-633-6740/6741
FAX: 671-633-6737/6742
EMAIL: info@msa-guam.com
www.msa-guam.com
Inter-Island Cargo • Shipping Agency • Vessel Operator • Charterers

It's the most wonderful time of the year!
May the blessings of Christmas be with you, now and always, and may the new year bring you peace, joy, and success in all your endeavors.

Merry Christmas

From the management and staff of

Tan Holdings

HEALTH IS WEALTH

Tan Siu Lin Foundation

Christmas 2024

How to avoid financial stress during the holiday season

By ADRIANA MORGA
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP)—The holidays are meant to be a time of celebration with family and friends. But they can also bring pressure to spend money on gifts, gatherings and plane tickets home, exacerbated by brand emails, social media influencers and family expectations.

With credit card debt rising and prices for many items still high due to inflation, overspending during the holiday season can add to the financial stress many Americans are already experiencing, said Dr. Marketa Wills, CEO and medical director of the American Psychiatric Association.

"The idea that one is on the hook for buying gifts for all their friends and families adds an enormous amount of stress on someone trying to have a perfect holiday," Wills said.

But there are ways to get through the holidays without spending more than you can afford. From setting expectations with your family to making a budget to gifting experiences rather than things, here are expert recommendations to avoid financial stress this holiday season:

Start with a budget

To avoid overspending on gifts for family and friends, set a specific goal, said Matt Watson, CEO of Origin, a financial planning app. Ask yourself what your spending limit is before you start shopping.

"People get into 'justification mode' where you have a general sense of what you want to spend but then you see this really nice thing and all of the sudden you've done that a few times and you spend twice as much as you thought you might," Watson said.

Watson also recommends that you include in your budget calculations how much you'll pay for taxes and shipping.

Manage expectations with loved ones

In many families, the holidays mean going all out with gift-giving. But this can quickly become stressful if your finances make it hard to keep up. Managing expectations is key.

"You can avoid feeling inadequate, or like you're not doing a good job, by having an honest conversation about where your finances are," Watson said.

Being open about your money can be difficult, but sharing if you are struggling with debt or other financial issues can help family and friends understand that they should prioritize low-cost gifts or activities.

Don't wait until the last minute

Planning your holiday shopping ahead of time can make it easier to stick to your budget,. "When people feel rushed, oftentimes they're going to buy more expensive things," said Watson, who also pointed out that shipping costs increase closer to Christmas.

As you budget for the holidays, make a list of the items you want to purchase and slowly start buying them. This way, you divide your costs among several paychecks and avoid relying on credit for last-minute expenses.

Get creative

Wills recommends that people opt for homemade gifts if they want to show appreciation for their loved ones without overspending. Homemade gifts don't always have to be crafts, they can also be actions.

"I will do babysitting for you, I will cook a meal for you," Wills said. "Those kinds of things take a financial pressure off and make for a more joyous holiday season."

In recent years, shopping expert Trae Bodge has noticed that younger people prefer to gift each other experiences rather than items. She recommends finding affordable, fun activities to do with your loved ones.

Examples include going ice skating, hiking or hosting a potluck. You could also gift a photoshoot or framed pictures or digital albums to commemorate happy experiences.

Create your own traditions

Expectations or traditions you grew up with, such as buying expensive gifts for every member of your extended family, can cause stress during the holidays. This is what Bodge refers as "keeping up with the Joneses," which refers to trying to keep up with the expectations of other people rather than what is realistic for you to spend.

"Sometimes you may have a family member that is very financially well-off and they love to treat you to big, extravagant things. If you're not in that same financial position, you should not feel compelled to return the favor," Bodge said.

When creating your own new traditions, Watson recommends sharing the financial goals you have, such as saving for a house or paying off debt. This will help your loved ones understand why you're looking to limit expenses during the holidays.

Divide spending responsibilities

Wills also recommends cutting costs by being selective with your expenses. For example, when it comes to hosting, even having a small group of people can be very expensive if you're expected to pay for everything. If you're in this situation, you could propose that everyone brings a dish.

"Think about having a potluck meal for the holiday. Have everybody bring something to the event to help share the cost," she said.

Communicate your feelings

If you are having financial difficulties, it can help to talk about it with your family and friends.

"Sharing about stress can in and of itself be therapeutic for the individual who may be having concerns for that during the during the holiday season," Wills said.

Making room to listen to your loved ones' feelings is equally important, she said.

And if the holidays are a tough time for you, Wills recommended that you prioritize your mental health and good habits such as resting well and exercising.

Don't be afraid to say no

It's the season where social events are happening every weekend but if they are causing you too much financial stress or hurting your mental health, it's okay to be selective.

Additionally, if you start feeling uncomfortable about certain conversations with your family, Wills recommends you take some time for yourself by taking a walk or removing yourself from the conversation.

Seek professional help if you need it

If you are experiencing mental health struggles, there are several resources you can use to find professional help.

In the U.S., you can dial 211 to speak with a mental health expert, confidentially and for free.

Other mental health resources include:

- Veterans Crisis Line: call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text the word 'Home' to 741-741
- The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ Youth: 1-866-488-7386
- The Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860

This Christmas, may your home be filled
with the joyous sounds of laughter and the sweet
aroma of festive treats. May your gatherings be
merry, your hearts light, and your moments memorable.
Here's to a season of celebrations, cherished traditions,
and a new year filled with hope and prosperity.
Warmest wishes from our family to yours.
Western Union
Money Transfer
Merry Christmas!
Western Union Agent | Location | Contact Number | Business Hours
SAIPAN
Insurance & Business Management Corporation | HDH Building, Garapan | 1-670-234-7888 | 8:00AM-6:00PM (M-F) / 8:00AM-4:00PM (S)
ASKS Fashion & Salon | Garapan, St., Garapan | 1-670-233-2643 | 9:00AM-3:30PM (M-S)
E-Center Remittance | Middle Road, Gualo Rai | 1-670-233-5252 | 8:00AM-2:00PM (M-F)
Island Best Choice | Marianas Business Plaza, Susupe | 1-670-235-2883 | 9:00AM-6:00PM (M-F) / 8:00AM-4:00PM (S)
Armatech Remittance | Beach Road, Susupe | 1-670-234-8894 | 10:00AM-6:00PM (M-F) / 1:00PM-6:00PM (S)
Islander Mini Mart | Beach Road, San Antonio | 1-670-234-5031 | 7:00AM-7:00PM (M-SUN)
Islander Rent A Car | Airport Road, Dandan | 1-670-235-8233 | 8:00AM-5:00PM (M-F)
TINIAN
Tinian Fuel Services | San Jose, Tinian | 1-670-433-4428 | 8:00AM-5:00PM (M-S) / 8:00AM-12:00PM (SUN)
ROTA
Rota Merchandising Corporation | Songsong, Rota | 1-670-532-0401 | 9:00AM-2:00PM (M-F)
INSURANCE & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
Unit 104 MJ Building, Garapan
PO Box 501217 Saipan MP 96950 • Tel No. 234-7888/7898

Younger generations swap tradition for self-expression with holiday decorations

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—Whether dressed in black, mimicking bare branches or decked out with enough bows for a Taylor Swift concert, the Christmas trees in some U.S. homes this year display an unconventional streak. They beckon visitors to behold the decorator's personality, not a mere symbol of Yuletide cheer.

The new-fashioned approach to holiday decorating doesn't end there. A demographic that ranges from teenagers up to adults shy of middle age are ditching the dominant green and red of Christmases past for pastel pink and blue palettes, going glam with faux fur, lamé and feather details, and investing in wacky or whimsical outdoor displays, according to retail and design experts.

"In a way, holiday décor for Gen Z and millennials is less about tradition and more about self-expression. It's their own take on a season that's all about warmth and joy, but with a thoroughly modern twist," said Eric Goranson, an interior designer and host of the nationally syndicated radio show and podcast "Around the House."

U.S. retailers, including Michaels, National Tree Co. and Home Depot, the nation's largest home improvement retailer, have encouraged the trend by bringing out Instagram-ready holiday collections they think will resonate with younger customers and glow especially bright on social media. Some trees can be programmed with a cellphone app to play music and to flash customized lighting effects.

Seasonal home decor company Balsam Brands, which sells Christmas decorations under the Balsam Hill brand, increased its assortment of artificial twig trees embellished with fairy lights, faux crystal and pearl garlands, and bows, including metallic and glitter versions.

"They want to stand out," Jen Derry, Balsam Brands' chief merchandising officer, said of the customers who are putting a nontraditional spin on tree trimming. "They want to be a little different and put their own point of view out there. And then they want to share with the world."

Life & Style

‘Sonic 3’ bests ‘Mufasa: The Lion King’ at the box office

NEW YORK (AP)—In the holiday season battle of big-budget family movies, Paramount Pictures’ “Sonic the Hedgehog 3” sped past the Walt Disney Co.’s “Mufasa: The Lion King” to take the top spot at the box office ahead of the lucrative Christmas corridor in theaters.

“Sonic the Hedgehog 3” debuted with $62 million in ticket sales over the weekend, according to studio estimates. With strong reviews (86% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) and a high score from audiences (an “A” on CinemaScore), “Sonic 3” is well positioned to be the top choice in cinemas during the busiest moviegoing period of the year.

It was telling of some wider trends that “Sonic 3”—made for $122 million—bested one of Disney’s top properties. Videogame adaptations, once among the most derided movie genres, have emerged as one of the most dependable box office forces in recent years. The two previous “Sonic” movies together grossed more $700 million worldwide and the third installment appears likely to do better than both of them. A fourth “Sonic” movie is already in development.

“Mufasa,” however, was humbled in its opening weekend, with its $35 million in domestic ticket sales coming in notably shy of expectations . The photorealistic “Lion King” prequel even opened wider than “Sonic 3,” launching on 4,100 theaters and gobbling up most IMAX screens, compared with 3,761 locations for “Sonic 3.”

Though “Mufasa’s” reviews were poor (56% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes), audiences gave it an “A-” CinemaScore.

AP

This image released by Paramount Pictures and Sega of America shows the character Sonic, voiced by Ben Schwartz, in a scene from “Sonic the Hedgehog 3.”

“Sonic 3” nearly doubled the haul for “Mufasa,” which cost more than $200 million to make. Disney could look to $87.2 million in international sales to help make up the difference. The third “Sonic” will rollout in most overseas markets in the coming weeks.

In director Jeff Fowler’s “Sonic 3,” Ben Schwartz returns as the voice of the hedgehog, alongside Tails the Fox (Colleen O’Shaughnessey), Knuckles the Echidna (Idris Elba) and Jim Carrey in scene-stealing dual roles as Dr. Robotnik and his grandfather.

“Moonlight” filmmaker Barry Jenkins directs “Mufasa’s” voice cast, including Aaron Pierre, Kelvin Harrison Jr., Donald Glover, Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, Mads Mikkelsen and Blue Ivy Carter. It follows Jon Favreau’s 2019 photorealistic “The Lion King” remake, which made $1.66 billion globally despite mixed reviews. “Mufasa” didn’t come close to that film’s huge $191 million opening weekend.

“We felt strongly that the marketplace could support both movies and we’re certainly holding up our side of the bargain,” said Chris Aronson, distribution chief for Paramount.

No major franchise movie is coming this Christmas. The most anticipated Dec. 25 release might be “A Complete Unknown,” with Timothee Chalamet as Bob Dylan. That means “Sonic 3” could be looking at several weeks in a row at No. 1.

“The family audience was 59% on ‘Sonic 2.’ This time it’s 46%. That 13% drop reflects the time of year we’re dealing with,” said Aronson. “I think once the marketplace really cooks, ‘Sonic’ is going to be the dominant force.”

Many of Disney’s live-action adaptations – including “Aladdin,” “Beauty and the Beast” and “Jungle Book” – have been big hits. Others, such as “Dumbo,” “Mulan” and “The Little Mermaid,” have been less well received. More are on the way, including a new “Snow White” in March, “Lilo & Stitch” in May, and plans for “Moana” and “Tangled” to get the same live-action treatment.

Blake Lively accuses ‘It Ends With Us’ director of harassment, smear campaign

Blake Lively has accused her “It Ends With Us” director and co-star Justin Baldoni of sexual harassment on the set of the movie and a subsequent effort to “destroy” her reputation in a legal complaint.

The complaint obtained by The Associated Press, which The New York Times reported was filed Friday with the California Civil Rights Department, precedes a lawsuit. It names Baldoni, the studio behind the romantic drama “It Ends With Us” and Baldoni’s publicists among the defendants.

In the complaint, Lively accuses Baldoni and the studio of embarking on a “multi-tiered plan” to damage her reputation following a meeting in which she and her husband Ryan Reynolds addressed “repeated sexual harassment and other disturbing behavior” by Baldoni and a producer on the movie.

The plan, the complaint said, included a proposal to plant theories on online message boards, engineer a social media campaign and place news stories critical of Lively.

Baldoni enlisted publicists and crisis managers in a “sophisticated, coordinated, and well-financed retaliation plan” meant to “bury” and “destroy” Lively if she went public with her on-set concerns, the complaint alleges.

“To safeguard against the risk of Ms. Lively ever revealing the truth about Mr. Baldoni, the BaldoniWayfarer team created, planted, amplified, and boosted content designed to eviscerate Ms. Lively’s credibility,” the complaint states. “They engaged in the same techniques to bolster Mr. Baldoni’s credibility and suppress any negative content about him.”

The complaint also says Baldoni “abruptly pivoted away from” the movie’s marketing plan and “used domestic violence ‘survivor content’ to protect his public image.”

Bryan Freedman, an attorney representing Baldoni, Wayfarer Studios and its representatives, called the claims “completely false, outrageous and intentionally salacious.”

He pushed back against Lively’s allegations of a coordinated campaign, saying the studio “proactively” hired a crisis manager “due to the multiple demands and threats made by Ms. Lively during production.”

Freedman also said Lively threatened to not appear on set and not promote the film “if her demands were not met.”

Those demands were not specified in the statement, but Lively’s complaint lists 30 demands that she said Baldoni and others agreed to after their tense sit-down over her hostile work environment concerns.

Among them: “no more showing of nude videos or images of women” to Lively and others on set and no more discussions about pornography, sexual experiences or genitalia.

She also said Baldoni should not ask her trainer about her weight without her consent, should not press her about her religious beliefs and should make “no further mention of her dead father.”

An intimacy coordinator was also required to be on set whenever Lively shared a scene with Baldoni and he was barred from entering her trailer or the make-up trailer while she was undressed.

The demands also stipulated that there would be “no more improvising of kissing” scenes or adding of sex scenes to the film outside of the ones in the script Lively approved when she signed on. ***(AP)***

Widow has no interest in an intimate relationship

DEAR ABBY: Six months ago, I began seeing a man I like very much but don’t want to be intimate with. We are in our “young” 70s, and both of us were widowed two years ago after 50-year marriages. We agreed early on that neither of us will remarry.

We are affectionate, and he’ll occasionally kiss my cheek, nape of my neck or forehead. We hug. That’s as much as I want. I wouldn’t want to hurt his feelings, but I’m worried he may want more intimacy, which I am not willing to give. What advice do you have for me?

LIMITED IN INDIANA

DEAR LIMITED: Because you are sure you don’t want an intimate relationship with this man and are being given signals that he may want more from you, talk frankly with him about it. You are both mature people, and it’s the only fair way to handle a situation like this. You may find, to your relief, that you are misreading his intentions. If you aren’t, he needs to know he’s barking up the wrong tree.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My father dated someone for several years. She broke up with him around five years ago. She’s a pleasant person, so we stay in touch via Christmas cards. Recently, she texted me that she was sending me a box of mementos, including pictures from their relationship. I was away on business, so I didn’t have a chance to respond.

The shoebox arrived this morning, and I just received a text from her asking if I had received it. Honestly, I feel this was inappropriate because the relationship was between my father and her. I believe she should have sent the items to him instead. How should I respond?

ONLY THE SON IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR ONLY THE SON: Respond by telling the woman the box arrived. She may have sent it to you because she wanted no more direct contact with your father. Call your dad, tell him his ex-girlfriend sent the mementos to you, ask if he wants them or would prefer you dispose of them and then follow his guidance.

■■■

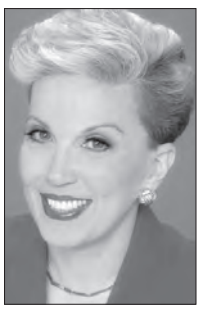
DEAR ABBY: I have been happily single for most of my life, and I treasure the friendship and company of my other women friends. My question concerns a situation that happens frequently when one of them starts dating or marries. They seem to feel I should enjoy the company of BOTH of them together from then on. My response has been to refuse any invitations, but it feels rude and impolite. I would appreciate your advice, and thank you!

SINGLE LADY IN THE MIDWEST

DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR SINGLE LADY: Running away isn’t the answer. Instead of cutting off these women without explanation when they become involved in a romantic relationship, it would make more sense to point out to them that women (and men) communicate differently when members of the opposite sex are present. It’s the truth. Couples don’t have to be joined at the hip 100% of the time, and, in fact, it’s healthier for their relationship when they sometimes socialize as individuals.

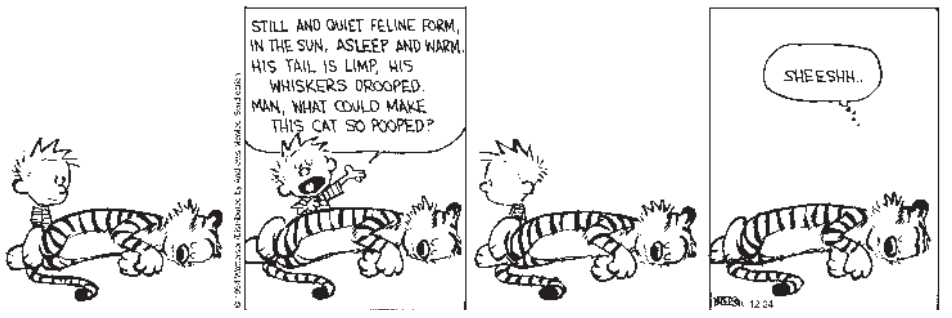
■■■

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in “What Every Teen Should Know.” Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


STILL AND QUIET FELINE FORM, IN THE SUN, ASLEEP AND WARM. HIS TAIL IS LIMP, HIS WHISKERS DROOPED. MAN, WHAT COULD MAKE THIS CAT SO POOPED?
SHEESHH..

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

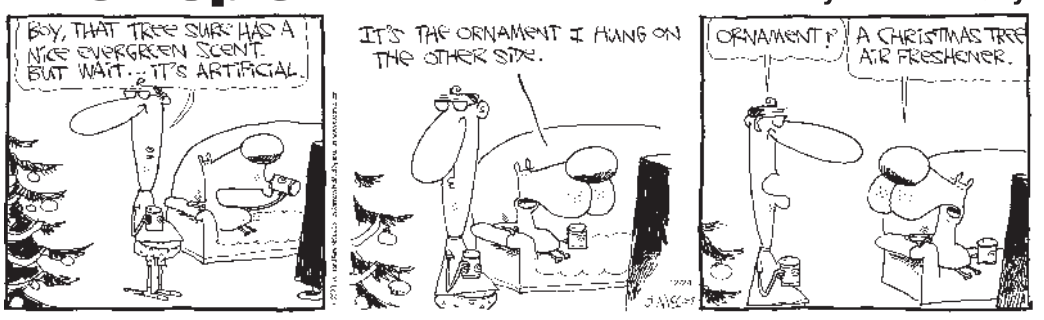
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

LETS PUT OUT THE MILK AND COOKIES FOR SANTA.
UM... DAD ATE ALL THE COOKIES.
DAD!
CALM DOWN. WE'LL THINK OF SOMETHING.
I STILL SAY PICKLES AND MILK SEEMS WEIRD.
MAYBE HE'LL APPRECIATE SOME VARIETY.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


BOY, THAT TREE SURE HAS A NICE EVERGREEN SCENT. BUT WAIT... IT'S ARTIFICIAL.
IT'S THE ORNAMENT I HANG ON THE OTHER SIDE.
ORNAMENT?
A CHRISTMAS TREE AIR FRESHENER.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Cat coats
5 "Tasty!"
8 Eric of "Munich"
12 Actor Guinness
13 Aachen article
14 Alike (Fr.)
15 iPod variety
16 Tot's winter wear
18 Frosty, for one
20 Arcade pioneer
21 Vegas opener
22 Green prefix
23 Latin dance
26 Deception
30 — Jima
31 Spell-off
32 Artist Yoko
33 Salad ingredient
36 "Say something!"
38 Succor
39 Anger
40 Octet count
43 More blizzard-like, say
47 Harry Potter's Hedwig, for one
49 Skater Lipinski
50 Entreaty
51 Arctic explorer John
52 Like some nogs
53 Mathematician John
54 Boot camp VIP
55 Aussie hoppers

DOWN

1 Rooters
2 — Bator
3 Gambling city
4 Grimaces
5 Mini-plateaus
6 Wis. neighbor
7 6 on a phone
8 Give
9 Water, to Juan
10 "Monsoon Wedding" director Mira
11 Choir voices
17 Texas city
19 Goat's cry
22 Compass dir.
23 Bro's kin
24 Bristle
25 Bathroom, in London
26 Briny expanse
27 Average guy
28 — roll (winning)
29 — choy
31 Foundation
34 Guitar pedal
35 Compassion
36 "No seats"
37 Bluish-gray
39 Cove
40 "NFL Live" airer
41 "To Live and Die —"
42 Leaves
43 Free stuff
44 Othello's betrayer
45 Therefore
46 Light beams
48 Choice words?

Solution time: 22 mins.

A	C	E	H	■	I	A	P	■	P	S	A	I
V	A	P	E	■	I	N	A	■	R	O	C	A
O	M	E	N	■	G	A	R	L	A	N	D	S
W	E	E	O	N	E	■	A	T	T	A	C	K
■	■	■	W	A	R	T	■	R	E	T	■	■
G	A	R	N	E	R	E	D	■	R	I	A	L
E	N	E	■	S	A	X	O	N	■	N	I	B
L	T	D	S	■	G	A	R	O	F	A	L	O
■	■	B	E	G	■	S	I	R	E	■	■	■
A	N	A	L	O	G	■	S	A	V	I	O	N
G	A	R	F	I	E	L	D	■	E	R	A	T
A	M	O	I	■	M	J	A	■	R	A	H	S
R	E	N	E	■	S	T	Y	■	S	N	U	B

Yesterday's answer 12-24

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12				■	13			■	14			
15				■	16			17				
18				19			■	20				
■	■	■	21			■	22			■	■	■
23	24	25			■	26				27	28	29
30			■	■	31			■	■	32		
33			34	35			■	36	37			
■	■	■	38			■	39			■	■	■
40	41	42			■	43				44	45	46
47					48			■	49			
50				■	51			■	52			
53				■	54			■	55			

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Ryan Seacrest, 50; Stephenie Meyer, 51; Ricky Martin, 53; Diedrich Bader, 58.

Happy Birthday: Stop settling for less when you can have more. Refuse to let others railroad you into something that helps them more than it does you. Get your facts straight and set your mind on taking positive action. You are the master of your destiny, so take on what excites and motivates you to use your skills and experiences to do something exhilarating. Life choices matter; do what's best for you. Your numbers are 3, 14, 22, 28, 31, 34, 42.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Get involved in something you believe in, help a friend, host an event or take the initiative to establish what you want to pursue. The response you receive will be uplifting and encourage you to take on a partner and make a difference in your community. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Take better care of yourself. Avoid crowded places that can put your health in jeopardy. Use your energy and your money wisely. Focus on financial and personal growth and avoid letting anyone guilt you into paying or donating to something you don't need, want or subscribe to. Charity begins at home. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Watch out for scammers. Observe, ask questions and dismiss anyone putting pressure on you to act quickly when you don't have sufficient facts. Ask those you know and trust, and spend time with older or experienced friends or relatives who can shed light on what is reliable and what is not. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Refuse to let the little things get to you. Kick back and enjoy the festivities. Get into the spirit of the season and consider what you are grateful for. Volunteering to help those less fortunate will give you a broader scope of how you want to live and what you can accomplish. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Don't tempt fate. It's important to digest what's happening around you and determine how to protect yourself from getting swept up in someone else's melodrama. Put your energy into self-evaluation and make a to-do list that encourages you not to leave anything standing between you and your goals. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Uncertainty will surround your connection to people you don't see often. A supportive and attentive discussion will help you enhance your position and build trust that erases any doubt someone might have regarding your intentions. Be straightforward about your lifestyle and the changes you plan to incorporate. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Don't hesitate to open the door when opportunity knocks. Get out and socialize or spend time with someone you love. Romance, commitment and plans are yours to pursue, and the chance to make a move or a personal change will lead to new beginnings. Cast your fate to the wind. 3 stars

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Dig in and commence with the final touches that will make a difference as you put the past behind you to welcome what lies ahead. Accept an invitation or sign up for an event that is unique and offers an introduction to people who spark your interest. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Lean on your looks, friendly demeanor and effervescent qualities to win favors. Consider what's possible and stretch your mind to accommodate whatever you need to know to reach your destination. Preparation is vital to outdo and outlast anyone trying to compete with you. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Heading to a place where you can congregate with people you love will make you think and discover what's important to you. A shift in how you head into the new year is apparent; discarding what you no longer use will allow you to follow your dreams. ✪✪

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Expect to reap rewards. It's your turn to shine and to feel good about your achievements. An updated look will appeal to someone you love, offering special attention and a renewed interest in you. A home improvement or move will enhance your bank account, easing stress. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Simplify your life, turn down the lights and say no to extravagance, temptation and indulgence. Protect your rights and reputation, and be reasonable when making promises. Being steadfast will serve you well and ensure you maintain your status quo among your colleagues, friends and family. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are appealing, entertaining and trendy. You are empowering and helpful.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	2			3				8
	3	6			5		4	
		4	9	6				
4								1
			3	2		4	5	
2	6		1				9	7
3	4	2			7	6		5
7	5	8				9	3	
	1			5		7	8	4

Difficulty: ★★ 12/24

©2012 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

5	2	1	9	3	7	4	6	8
7	9	4	6	8	1	3	5	2
3	8	6	4	5	2	1	9	7
4	6	9	3	7	8	2	1	5
1	7	5	2	4	9	8	3	6
8	3	2	5	1	6	7	4	9
6	5	8	1	2	3	9	7	4
9	1	7	8	6	4	5	2	3
2	4	3	7	9	5	6	8	1

Difficulty: ★ 12/23

©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

GETTING IN THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT **Solution: 10 letters**

T	C	T	D	A	D	I	V	A	N	Z	I	L	E	F
C	H	E	S	T	N	U	T	S	D	R	A	C	E	I
D	I	G	L	A	L	R	E	B	M	E	C	E	D	R
E	M	A	I	A	E	E	S	U	L	J	R	S	T	E
C	N	R	G	N	A	F	S	E	I	T	T	O	H	P
K	E	L	H	G	D	I	T	N	S	F	Y	C	G	L
T	Y	A	T	E	C	I	G	A	I	S	R	O	I	A
H	N	N	S	L	T	L	M	G	T	T	R	O	N	C
E	A	D	O	S	E	T	Y	C	R	C	E	K	T	E
H	L	V	N	B	S	A	U	E	A	M	I	N	V	
A	E	O	E	I	D	A	U	N	K	R	T	E	E	I
L	W	L	R	I	P	E	A	C	E	R	O	S	L	T
L	L	H	L	A	C	I	G	A	M	S	U	L	I	S
S	C	O	R	C	H	E	S	T	R	A	S	T	S	E
O	H	O	L	Y	N	I	G	H	T	H	T	I	A	F

© 2024 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 12/24

Angels, Cards, Carols, Chestnuts, Chimney, Cookies, December, Deck the Halls, Faith, Feast, Feliz Navidad, Festive, Fireplace, Garland, Gifts, Holiday, Jingle Bells, Let It Snow, Lights, Love, Magical, Merry, Midnight, Music, O' Christmas Tree, O' Holy Night, Orchestra, Peace, Silent Night, Star, Tinsel, Toys, Tunes, Turkey

Yesterday's Answer: Made-up

For **WONDERWORD** apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

Penix wins debut as Atlanta QB as Falcons beat hapless Giants

ATLANTA (AP)—Michael Penix Jr. won his debut as Atlanta's starting quarterback, thanks largely to a defense that returned a pair of interceptions for touchdowns, and the Falcons bolstered their playoff hopes by handing the hapless New York Giants their franchise-record 10th straight loss, 34-7 on Sunday.

Jessie Bates and Matthew Judon each had a pick-6 to carry Atlanta (8-7) to its second straight win after a four-game losing streak put its postseason hopes in jeopardy. The Falcons came into the week a game behind Tampa Bay in the NFC South and holding the tiebreaker edge over the Buccaneers, who were playing Sunday night at Dallas.

Penix, the No. 8 overall pick in this year's draft, got his first NFL start against the Giants (2-13) after the Falcons decided to bench turnover-prone Kirk Cousins, just nine months after signing him to a four-year, $180 million contract that included $100 million in guaranteed money.

The left-handed rookie was not overwhelmed by the moment, completing 18 of 27 passes for 202 yards — numbers that would've been better if not for at least three dropped passes, one of which Kyle Pitts bobbled right into the hands of a New York defender for Penix's lone interception.

AP

Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Penix Jr. (9) tackled by New York Giants linebacker Kayvon Thibodeaux (5) short of the first down in the first half of an NFL football game in Atlanta, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2024.

RAMS 19, JETS 9

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—Matthew Stafford threw a go-ahead 11-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Higbee early in the fourth quarter after a turnover by Aaron Rodgers and Los Angeles beat New York for their fourth consecutive victory.

The Rams (9-6), who have won five of six, maintained their spot atop the NFC West standings with the victory after a slow start against the Jets (4-11) on a day when it was a frosty 23 degrees (minus-5 Celsius) at kickoff.

But Los Angeles' defense, which struggled most of the game against Rodgers and New York's offense, came up with a momentum-turning play.

With the game tied at 9 early in the fourth quarter, Kam Curl sacked Rodgers on a blitz and forced a fumble that Jared Verse recovered at the Jets 21.

Three plays later, Stafford found Higbee—making his season debut after missing the first 14 games with a knee injury—for a go-ahead 11-yard touchdown that made it 16-9.

BENGALS 24, BROWNS 6

CINCINNATI (AP)—Joe Burrow threw three touchdown passes, including one as he was falling to the turf, and Cincinnati kept their slim playoff hopes alive with a victory over Cleveland.

The Bengals (7-8) need to win their last two games and get some help to reach the postseason.

Burrow passed for three or more TDs for the seventh consecutive game and finished 23 of 30 for 252 yards. Ja'Marr Chase had six catches for 97 yards and a garbage-time touchdown for Cincinnati to reach 1,510 yards this season and break his own franchise record of 1,455 yards set in 2021.

Myles Garrett, who said this week the Browns franchise should be focused on winning and not rebuilding, recorded the 100th sack of his career in the second quarter.

With Dorian Thompson-Robinson replacing Jameis Winston at quarterback, Cleveland (3-12) missed some chances in the red zone.

LIONS 34, BEARS 17

CHICAGO (AP)—Jared Goff threw for 336 yards and three touchdowns, and Detroit remained on top of the NFC with their franchise-record 13th win, over Chicago.

Jameson Williams had a career-high 143 yards receiving on five catches, including an 82-yard touchdown in the second quarter. Jahmyr Gibbs ran for 109 yards and a score, and Detroit (13-2) broke a tie with the 1991 and 2023 teams for the most wins in franchise history. The Lions also set a single-season record for scoring with 493 points.

The Lions took control early against the Bears (4-11), and they even flexed their dominance by executing a trick play in which Goff intentionally stumbled while dropping back. With Detroit players yelling "Fumble!" and Gibbs pretending to dive for the ball, Goff threw to Sam LaPorta for a 21-yard touchdown that made it 34-14.

COMMANDERS 36, EAGLES 33

LANDOVER, Md. (AP)—After Jalen Hurts left with a concussion, Jayden Daniels threw five touchdown passes while running at will in the rookie quarterback's latest masterful performance, and Washington ended Philadelphia' winning streak at 10 by rallying to defeat the NFC East leaders.

Daniels' heroics culminated with a 57-yard touchdown drive in the final 1:58, finding Jamison Crowder in the end zone with 6 seconds left. He bounced back from throwing an interception on the previous possession and led the Commanders (10-5) back after they fell behind by 14 points seven minutes into the game and trailed by 14 going into the fourth quarter.

They are now on the verge of making the playoffs after handing Philadelphia (12-3) its first loss since Sept. 29. The Eagles played without Hurts for the vast majority of the game and failed to clinch the division and one of the conference's top two seeds despite Saquon Barkley running for 109 yards and two touchdowns in the first quarter alone.

Daniels was the primary reason for that, beating the Eagles a month after losing to them on the road. He was 24 of 39 for 258 yards with a pair of TDs to Crowder and Olamide Zaccheaus and one to Terry McLaurin — and Daniels was Washington's leading rusher with 81 yards on nine carries.

COLTS 38, TITANS 30

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP)—Jonathan Taylor rebounded from perhaps the most embarrassing moment of his career by rushing for 218 yards and scoring three times including runs of 65 and 70 yards, leading Indianapolis past Tennessee.

Indy rushed for a franchise-record 335 yards as Taylor posted the second-highest single-game rushing total in the league this season and also of his five-year career. The three rushing scores were the most since he scored four TDs against Buffalo in 2021.

Taylor's big day came one week after he dropped the ball before the goal line, and it bounced out of bounds for a touchback in a crushing loss at Denver.

This time, Taylor made sure that didn't happen again this week by holding onto the ball all the way through the end zone. Indy (7-8) won its fourth straight in this AFC South series.

PANTHERS 36, CARDINALS 30, OT

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Chuba Hubbard ran for a 21-yard touchdown in overtime, and Carolina eliminated Arizona from playoff contention with a victory.

Hubbard finished with 152 yards and two TDs on 25 carries. He rushed for 49 yards on the decisive drive in OT.

Kyler Murray threw for 202 yards with a touchdown and an interception, and his 20-yard TD run helped rally Arizona (7-8) from a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter to force the extra period. But it wasn't enough for the Cardinals, who led the NFC West in early November but have lost four of five since.

Bryce Young went 17 of 26 for 158 yards and two touchdowns and ran for a career-high 68 yards, including 23-yard score, as the Panthers snapped a four-game skid. Adam Thielen and David Moore had TD catches for Carolina (4-11).

VIKINGS 27, SEAHAWKS 24

SEATTLE (AP)—Sam Darnold connected with a well-covered Justin Jefferson with 3:51 left for his third TD pass of the game, and Minnesota outlasted Geno Smith and Seattle to keep pace with Detroit for the top spot in the NFC.

After the Seahawks took the lead on Smith's third TD pass, Darnold led a 30-second drive that was aided by a 15-yard facemask penalty. He stepped up in a collapsing pocket and launched a deep ball that Jefferson hauled in just short of the goal line with two defenders closing in.

Jefferson finished with 10 catches for 148 yards as the Vikings (13-2) won their eighth straight. If they can beat Green Bay and Detroit to close out the season, they will earn the top seed in the conference and a first-round playoff bye.

Darnold threw for multiple touchdowns for the 11th time this season and more than 200 yards for the 10th. He finished 22 of 35 for 246 yards, helping Kevin O'Connell become the first Vikings coach with multiple 13-win seasons. Not bad for a veteran who was signed to a one-year deal as a placeholder after the Vikings drafted J.J. McCarthy, who suffered a season-ending knee injury in the preseason.

DOLPHINS 29, 49ERS 17

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)—Tua Tagovailoa threw for 215 yards and a touchdown, Jason Sanders nailed five field goals, and Miami kept their playoff chances alive by beating San Francisco.

The 49ers were eliminated from the playoffs before the game because of wins by the Los Angeles Rams and Washington Commanders earlier Sunday. The loss ensured that last year's NFC champions will have a losing season for the first time since 2020.

The Dolphins (7-8) helped their chances of making the playoffs for a third straight season, but will need to win their final two games and get help from losses by the Broncos, Chargers and Colts for that to happen.

Trailing by nine early in the fourth, San Francisco quarterback Brock Purdy found tight end Eric Saubert for a 2-yard score that cut the lead to 19-17, but the Niners couldn't get past self-inflicted wounds.

BILLS 24, PATRIOTS 21

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)—James Cook scored two touchdowns, Buffalo's defense forced three second-half turnovers and the AFC East champion Bills overcame a 14-0 deficit to pull out a win over New England.

With trainers examining Bills quarterback Josh Allen's right throwing elbow on the sideline, cornerback Taron Johnson secured the victory by recovering a fumble in the end zone to put Buffalo up 24-14 with 10:10 left. Allen returned on the Bills next possession on which he completed two of three attempts and finished 16 of 29 for 154 yards, with a touchdown and an interception.

Allen, who is having an NFL MVP-caliber season, appeared to be hurt on a 7-yard scamper early in the fourth quarter.

On Buffalo's next offensive snap following a false start penalty, Allen attempted a deep pass that fluttered and fell short to end the drive.

Allen shook his hand in what appeared to be discomfort on the sideline before he was cleared to return with what the Bills announced was a bruised elbow.

RAIDERS 19, JAGUARS 14

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Aidan O'Connell returned from an injury and passed for 257 yards, and Las Vegas ended a 10-game losing streak with a victory over Jacksonville.

The Raiders, whose skid was the longest active streak in the NFL, won for the first time since beating the Cleveland Browns 20-16 on Sept. 29. The victory, however, means the Raiders (3-12) moved ahead of the league-worst New York Giants (2-13). The team with the worst record is in line for the top pick in next year's draft.

Jacksonville (3-12) has lost seven of its last eight games and is 2-9 in one-score contests.

O'Connell made his first start in two weeks. He didn't play in Monday night's 15-9 loss to Atlanta because of a left knee injury.

Brooks scores 27 points as Rockets beat Raptors

TORONTO (AP)—Dillon Brooks scored 27 points, Jalen Green had 22 and the Houston Rockets won in Toronto for the first time in more than five years by beating the struggling Raptors 114-110 on Sunday night.

Alperen Sengun had 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Rockets, who hadn't won in Toronto since Dec. 5, 2019. Current Rockets guard Fred VanVleet scored 20 points for the reigning NBA-champion Raptors in that game.

Ja'Kobe Walter fouled out with a career-high 27 points and Chris Boucher and Ochai Agbaji each added 15 as Toronto's losing streak reached seven. The Raptors have lost six straight at home.

AP

Toronto Raptors forward Jamison Battle (77) pressures Houston Rockets guard Jalen Green (4) during first-half NBA basketball game action in Toronto, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2024.

PACERS 122, KINGS 95

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Pascal Siakam had 19 points and 10 rebounds, and Indiana dominated the second half to rout Sacramento.

Siakam scored 13 points after halftime, when the Pacers outscored the Kings 70-43 after the game was tied at 52 at the break. The Pacers shot 58% for the game and made 17 3-pointers in their season-high fourth straight victory.

Myles Turner added 15 points and Ben Sheppard had 14 off the bench. Tyrese Haliburton, who started his career in Sacramento, had 14 points. Seven Pacers finished in double figures.

The Pacers took an 87-78 lead into the fourth quarter, and then started the period on a 17-5 run to take a 21-point advantage.

De'Aaron Fox had 23 points in the Kings' fourth straight loss. Domantas Sabonis had 17 points and 21 rebounds for his eighth straight double-double.

NUGGETS 132, PELICANS 129, OT

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Nikola Jokic overcame a slow scoring start for his ninth triple-double of the season, finishing with 27 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists in Denver' overtime victory over New Orleans.

Jokic turned it on after failing to score in the first 21 minutes. Jamal Murray added 27 points, scoring Denver's final five in overtime, and Russell Westbrook had 21.

The Pelicans led 107-98 with 7:50 left in regulation, but Jokic scored seven points in a 15-2 Denver run over a 3:41 span to give the Nuggets a 113-109 lead.

CJ McCollum put New Orleans up 119-117 with a 3-pointer with 52 seconds remaining, and Murray tied it with 8.8 seconds left. McCollum shot an airball on a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Jokic scored the first six points of overtime and assisted on an Aaron Gordon layup to put Denver up 129-125.

Jordan Hawkins led New Orleans with 25 points. McCollum had 24.

Magic celebrate an enormous comeback, Heat lament a stunning collapse

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

A lead of at least 22 points with 12 minutes left means victory in the NBA. Over the last five years, including playoffs, there had been 796 instances of a team having such a lead entering the fourth quarter.

Their record: 796-0.

Their record now: 796-1.

The Orlando Magic pulled off a rally they'll surely remember, and the Miami Heat had a collapse they surely won't soon forget. The Magic outscored the Heat 37-8 in the fourth quarter to pull off an improbable 121-114 victory on Saturday night, winning a game in which they trailed by 25 in the first half and were down 22 with one quarter remaining.

"You can't really explain that," Magic coach Jamahl Mosley said. "That's something I haven't seen. I have not seen that ever in my years in the league, the ability to stay with it despite all of the circumstances that started in the beginning of the game."

Heat captain Bam Adebayo was more succinct.

"We relaxed because we were up," Adebayo said. "I feel like that's the karma of the game."

The Magic were playing without Paolo Banchero, Franz Wagner, Jalen Suggs and Gary Harris—and lost Moritz Wagner to what may be a serious knee injury in the first quarter.

Depleted, they somehow still tied the biggest comeback in franchise history.

"This is the modern NBA right now, right? The 20-point lead is not what it was a decade ago and you have to finish all the way through," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

Some of the numbers were just baffling:

■ Orlando's 29-point margin in the fourth quarter was the biggest in any game since Phoenix outscored New Orleans by 29 on Feb. 19, 2021.

■ Miami's eight points in the fourth quarter were the fewest by any team in any quarter this season.

■ The last time Orlando trailed by 25 in a game and won was 1989.

"It's a group that just continues to fight," Mosley said.

The last time a team trailed by 22 or more entering the fourth quarter and won was Dec. 22, 2019, when the Toronto Raptors—down by 30 at one point, down by 23 with 12 minutes left—beat the Dallas Mavericks 110-107.

It was statistically bizarre. The Heat had their best-scoring quarter of the season (40 in the first), best-scoring half of the season (76 in the first), worst-scoring quarter of the season (8 in the fourth) and worst-scoring half of the season (38 in the second)—all in the same night.

The fourth quarter saw Orlando shoot 14 for 23—and Miami shoot 2 for 18. Cole Anthony had 13 points in the final quarter for the Magic, finishing with 35 points, eight rebounds and nine assists off the bench.

And that was another statistical oddity: Such a stat line for someone off the bench had happened only once since 1982—Stephen Curry had 40 points, eight rebounds and nine assists for Golden State in a playoff game in 2016, not starting that game because he had been sidelined by a sprained knee.

"I'm so happy for this team, man," Anthony said.

76ers star Joel Embiid working through injuries and mental health struggles

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Joel Embiid is trying to believe in the good that can come from asking for help. Embiid's career has yielded an MVP—and so many more DNPs—with a biography littered by the kind of devastating injuries that can, in time, heal.

Ask even the most casual 76ers fan, and they can rattle off a CliffsNotes version of Embiid's injury timeline: The broken bones in his feet, the grotesque dislocated finger that made it resemble a used bendy drinking straw, the torn meniscus in his right knee, the torn ligament in a thumb, a bout with Bell's palsy, and even his latest ailment—a busted sinus that compelled him to ask a media horde to cut the camera lights because of his sensitivity to the brightness beaming in his face.

Embiid played Friday night wearing a carbon graphite mask straight out of the "Phantom of the Opera" prop department. He needed the protection to save his face from another errant elbow, another sudden strike, that could thrust him into the kind of prolonged absence that has defined his star-crossed career.

With the 7-footer boasting a wingspan that could stretch a couple of Liberty Bells, his knack for knocking down spot-up 3s, Embiid's presence in the lineup is all that separates the Philadelphia 76ers from a playoff team and title contender to one drowning in the NBA standings.

He feels the burden. He understands the hardships.

Selected by the 76ers with the No. 3 overall pick in the 2014 NBA draft, Embiid carries the weight of expectations of Philly—and beyond—with him, and the injuries that sidelined the 2023 MVP and have denied him a real shot at being heralded as one of the NBA's greats have led him to admit the cracks they formed in his mental health was something he could no longer ignore.

So the native of Cameroon who once never believed in seeking help from others had decided over time—much like elite athletes Simone Biles, Naomi Osaka and retired swimmer Michael Phelps—to shake the once-taboo stigma of therapy and go all-in on the process to steer him through turbulent times in his professional career.

"It's kind of hard when you get in those moments where it's kind of hard not to feel bad about yourself, especially when you know who you are and what you can accomplish but it's not the way it is," Embiid said. "One lesson that I learned is to try and stop feeling bad about myself and just live day-by-day. Enjoy good people around me, positivity and not focus on the negativity."

Embiid has openly talked at times over the last year of feeling depressed from time on the shelf—he was sidelined for two full NBA seasons, and had chunks of so many others recovering, rehabbing, even resting—and this season was no different.

Embiid had his homegrown sidekick in All-Star Tyrese Maxey and nine-time All-Star Paul George along for the ride to form a kind of Big Three expected to challenge Boston, New York and Cleveland for Eastern Conference supremacy.

With all three walloped by injuries, they have played start-to-finish in all of two games this season.

Embiid slogged through headaches and dizziness to drop 34 points and led the 76ers past Charlotte on Friday night in a win that completed a 4-0 season sweep against the Hornets and propped the 76ers' record to a meager 9-16 overall.

"He does make the game so easy," George said. "A lot of stuff was just plays we weren't in sync on. We'll get that as we're on the court more."

The question again is raised around the NBA—what could the 76ers have accomplished had Embiid been healthy enough to always play 80 games a season?

As is the norm with Embiid, the two-time scoring champion will sit out the second game of a back-to-back Saturday at Cleveland.

"As long as it gets better every day," Embiid said, "that'll be good."

It's a modest goal as Embiid tries to make the days—using his word "manageable"—until perhaps it feels close to 100% in time for the playoffs.

His frankness in admitting he needed therapy belies a public persona of a 30-year-old who has delighted in playing the role of troll to needle rivals both in the locker room and on social media. Embiid—who signed a $193 million contract extension ahead of the season—has leaned on his wife and young son to push him through the hard days.

Embiid's a big brother to 20-somethings on the team like Maxey and rookie Jared McCain and he finally has a relatable peer this season in a fellow Olympic gold medalist George, who has had his own career interrupted by catastrophic injuries.

"You can never get enough of the support," Embiid said. "If I'm being honest, when you've got the support from your family, people close to you, teammates, guys like (George), that's the reason why you want to keep doing it and you want to keep figuring it out. That's who you play for. The people who care about you, people that support you, people that push you. I have a hard time disappointing people, which I'm working on. When you've got that type of support, it's kind of hard to feel bad about yourself. I like to please people. You've just got to keep going."

Keep going.

It's all Embiid can do now to find happiness on the court and in his personal life—and find some peace through treatment along the way.

He can at least improve his state of mind, even if the state of his body takes longer to heal.

"It's a work in progress. We'll see if it works," Embiid said. "You get to a point where nothing is working, I'm always willing to try anything and see if it works."

Sponsors aid growing Rota Marathon 2025

One month out from race day, registration for the 2nd Annual Rota Marathon in The Marianas on Jan. 18, 2025, has already exceeded the inaugural event held this year, with more sponsors lining up to aid the effort.

As of Dec. 18, 97 registrants from South Korea, USA, Guam, and The Marianas have signed up for the event, compared to 83 registrants for the inaugural race.

"We are on track and super excited to break our goal of 100 runners in 2025," said Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "We are especially grateful for all the partners joining the MVA in working to make Rota Marathon a sustainable annual signature event based on growing participation. It's wonderful to join forces in spreading the word that Rota as the place to visit in The Marianas in 2025!"

The Rota Marathon is organized by the MVA in cooperation with Rota Mayor's Office. This year's sponsors include Platinum Sponsor Star Marianas Air, Inc., Gold Sponsor Ambros/Marpac, and In-kind Sponsors I-Shop, Coral Ocean Resort, and Hybrid Shop.

Rota Marathon features a full marathon, half-marathon and 5K courses on one of the most picturesque islands of The Marianas archipelago, also known as "The World's Friendliest Island."

The race falls on the weekend of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a federal and local holiday. Early bird registration rates through Christmas Day (Dec. 25) are $25 for the full marathon, $20 for the half-marathon, and $15 for the 5K. Registration rates will increase on Dec. 26, 2024. Full marathon participants must be 16 years of age or older. Half marathon participants must be 14 years of age or older.

Cash prizes will be awarded to the Overall Top 3 Finishers, male and female. In the full marathon, prizes are $400 for first place, $300 for second place, and $200 for third place. In the half-marathon, prizes are $300 for first place, $200 for second place, and $150 for third place. In the 5K, prizes are $200 for first place, $150 for second place, and $100 for third place.

Rota is 30 minutes from the capitol island of Saipan by light-aircraft. In addition to daily flights, charter flights are operated by Star Marianas Air, Inc. to Rota from Saipan and Guam. The island also offers award-winning dive opportunities and numerous sites listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, including As Nieves Latte Stone Quary, a site designated a U.S. National Historic Landmark on Dec. 16, 2024, by the U.S. Department of the Interior. An NHL designation is the highest federal recognition of a property's historical, architectural or archeological significance.

The final day to register is Jan. 17, 2025. Mandatory race packet pickup will be on Jan. 17 from 5pm to 6pm at Rota Round House in Songsong, and the race briefing will be at 6pm.

MVA

Marquit Chavez and Jane Malabanan of Saipan pass along a quiet and picturesque road during Rota Marathon 2024 The Marianas. Registration is open at www.mymarianas.com for the 2nd Annual Rota Marathon on Jan. 18, 2025.

On Jan. 18, the full marathon will begin at 4am, half-marathon will begin at 5am, and the 5K will begin at 6:30am.

The road race will begin at Rota Round House in Songsong and traverse scenic and historic sites on the island. Registration includes a limited edition official Rota Marathon T-shirt, Rota Marathon medal, and one entry to the awards banquet to be held at 6pm on race day. Registration may be made online at www.mymarianas.com or in person at the MVA office in Saipan at 3366 Beach Rd., Suite 101, Garapan or at the MVA field office in Songsong, Rota.

For more information, visit www.mymarianas.com or contact MVA Community Projects specialist Ed Diaz at communityprojects@mymarianas.com or (670) 664-3200 or MVA Rota Field Operations supervisor Dave Atalig at datalig@mymarianas.com or (670) 532-0327. ***(PR)***

Brasuell takes 2024 Ye Olde Saipanne Golfe Clubbe title

Timothy "Tex" Brasuell recorded an impressive net 72 at the Coral Ocean Resort golf course last Dec. 7 to become the Ye Olde Saipanne Golfe Clubbe's 2024 Champion Golfer of the Year.

Brasuell's calm demeanor kept his scores low while his trusted antique Lucky 13 Sasquatch driver kept his balls in the fairway. But at the end of the day, it was Brasuell's steady putting that won him the palm. With other club members regularly three-jacking the unexpectedly difficult COP greens, Brasuell never took more than two putts per hole, often by sinking knee-knocking 5-7 footers. Brasuell's prowess on the greens prompted the joint silver medalist and 2019 champion Juan "Juj" Lizama to lament, "we were putted to death."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Timothy "Tex" Brasuell receives his prize money from Mike "26" Deary and last year's champion Wil "Paki" Maui.

"Well, I thank the good Lord for every putt sunk and reckon it was just my turn this year among my fellow competitors all prior year champs themselves. Any glory and honor I give to God and also dedicate this win to my father who taught me persistence with this most challenging sport at a young age," said Brasuell, who has been playing golf on and off for many years.

Tied at 74 for second with Lizama was the 2021 champion Bill "Supersandy" Riggen. Rounding out the Top 5 were the 2016 champion Mike "26" Deary with a 78 and last year's champion Wil "Paki" Maui with a 79.

After the round, an awards ceremony was held at the club's traditional venue of Wild Bill's Bar and Grill where Brasuell was presented with the perpetual claret jug and fitted with the champion's jacket by last year's winner Maui. Following the presentation, the Clubbe members enjoyed the delicious Thai food and malt beverages as provided by the Wild Bill's staff while simultaneously congratulating Brasuell and proclaiming that each of them would have won "but for those 3-6 putts that barely lipped out." ***(PR)***

GUAM

From page 16

successful, as well as her second life of 95 kg. She wasn't able to lift her last attempt of 100 kg.

With a best of 73 kg and 95 kg, her total was 168 kg which bagged her the gold.

The 30-year-old also claimed two silver medals in the open overall snatch lift and the open overall total weight lifted.

As for Pua, she successfully lifted a total weight of 118 kg for the gold in her weight class from a best snatch of 53 kg and a best clean & jerk lift of 65kg.

For Labausa, who underwent knee surgery after the Micro Games, she chose the procedure to give herself a chance to compete and improve. Coming off the surgery and competing, she said, "I felt nervous but I stayed focused on registering my first lifts successfully and just had fun from there."

During her lifts, she said, "I usually tell myself what to do in order to make a good lift. I visualize myself making the lift and do my best to stay calm and to stay focused."

As to the difference with her lifts in the Micro Games and in this competition, she said, "Physically I felt better. I have battled the same injury since 2018 and to have less pain really helps mentally as well."

She now looks forward to the 2025 Pacific Mini Games in Palau. "This competition is [a] stepping stone to it and I am happy that my results show that we are on the right track… I am just looking forward to aligning myself to keep improving in training and to be competing more in 2025."

She then said thanks to her training partners: "Devine Pua, Riella Ichiuo, our coach John Davis, CNMI Weightlifting, and my family and friends for their continued support."

For Pua, she said that the competition was "super fun! Great energy and a lot of amazing lifters. It was also an honor to be lifting with such strong ladies!"

During her lifts, the 25-year-old said, "I was definitely battling nerves throughout the whole thing which I feel costed me a lift in each category, both lifts I know I am capable of doing, but at least now I know what I need to work on for next time."

Her training leading up to the competition was five days a week for at least two hours, which she believes is the bare minimum to be great in the sport. "I kept telling myself, nothing is different, do it how you would in training. And it definitely helped me with my technique this time around," she said.

On what's next, she said, like Labausa, that this competition is a stepping stone for the 2025 Pacific Mini Games in Palau. "But before I can do that, I have one more competition to go in order to qualify for the national team. So, one thing at a time I guess, taking it day by day."

SHAINA

From page 16

matched. However, Malonzo pulled out some impressive saves and pulled away to win, 21-18.

In the boys division, Bautista discarded of Joseph Yang in two sets.

Bautista barely struggled in the first set and it flew by in his favor, 21-10. The second set saw Yang become more aggressive and take good swats at the birdie that kept Bautista on his toes. However, Bautista locked in and stranded Yang to 14 points for a 21-14 final.

In the girls doubles, Malonzo also won the gold after she teamed up with Lina Tsukagoshi. They were undefeated and collected three wins in the round-robin format of their division, while second place were partners Charmaine Bautista and Lansangan with two wins.

Malonzo said of her match against Lansangan that it was "actually scary because I practiced with her before and all the others I've played against today. I've actually had a lot of losses off them during those times, so I was expecting not to do well, but after I tried, I did my best, and got it."

She said she was coached and helped by her teammate Tsukagoshi. "She was the best coach. She was the person who helped me do my best and win the tournament."

On her win, she said, "It feels great knowing how I consider myself not to be the best player in the NMI or in general, but noticing how I won the tournament, it amazed me."

As for the tournament, she said, "it's nice. It gathered a lot of people to play. Some of them I've never seen before, so I really liked the tournament."

For the boys doubles, Bautista and Sernantie Jimenez paired up and beat Danielle Mulinyawe and Evan Seguritan in two sets, 21-13, 21-19, for the championship

Results of the open and masters divisions will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune.*

MARLINS

From page 16

their lead, 12-9.

Then, the Dodgers tried to gun for a rally and scored two runs to get within one again, 11-12, in the sixth. However, the Marlins' Pat Deleon Guerrero, Shine Tenorio, and Dennis Cruz all scored to be up by two, 15-13, in the last inning. The Dodgers then failed to reach home in the last inning and collected their first loss of the season, while the Marlins caught their first win.

In the individual standings as of last Dec. 11, Jerome Delos Santos of the Brewers led the league in batting average with a .692 from nine hits out of 15 at-bats. Second was the Blue Jays' Paul Salalila at .667 from six hits out of nine plate appearances, and third was the Brewers' Anson Jones at .625. He connected five hits out of eight at-bats.

Delos Santos also has the most runs scored with nine; J-Boy Deleon Guerrero has eight; J.J. Cabrera is at seven; and John Reyes, Jun Salalila, Manny Sablan, Rick Bauer, and Shawn Matsutaro have six each.

For doubles, Frank Robert, Hector Efraim, Jess Taitano, Paul Salalila, Pat Deleon Guerrero, Ray Renguul, and Roy Matagolai hit one each.

Geoffrey "Jeff" Cruz has hit the only two triples in the league, while no one has hit a homer yet.

For RBIs, Harlan Reyes and Manny Sablan collected six; Hector Efraim has five; and Cruz, Marino Hiroichi, and Pete Sablan have four each.

On the bump, Cruz has the lowest ERA with 1.71 in two games and 8.2 innings pitched, with a 1-0 win-loss record. He has an earned run of two and gave up 12 hits.

Second is the Marlins' Tony Flores at 2.19 ERA from two games and 3.2 innings pitched. He has one ER and 10 hits; and third is the Pirates' Peter 'Dung Tenorio at 2.31 ERA. he has pitched in three games, 9.1 innings, has a three ER, and 15 hits against him. He has a 1-0 record.

The strike out king is Kevin Kapileo from the Blue Jays with 12; Cruz has eight; Peter "Dung" Tenorio, Manny Salas, and Tony Benavent are at five each; and Aaron Benavente, Jason Hayes, and Larry Norita are at four strikeouts each.

Penix wins debut as Atlanta QB as Falcons beat hapless Giants

PAGE 13

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Sponsors aid growing Rota Marathon 2025

PAGE 15

Shaina, Marlon bag U17 badminton champs

LEIGH GASES

From left, NMBA's Nate Guerrero, second place in the U17 girls singles Genelyn Lansangan, first place Shaina Malonzo, and NMBA's Janelle Pangilinan pose for a photo during the awards ceremony of the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

LEIGH GASES

From left, NMBA's Nate Guerrero, second place in the U17 girls doubles Genelyn Lansangan and Charmaine Bautista, first place Lina Tsukagoshi and Shaina Malonzo, and NMBA's Janelle Pangilinan pose for a photo during the awards ceremony of the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

LEIGH GASES

From left, NMBA's Nate Guerrero, first place in the U17 boys singles Marlon Bautista, second place Joseph Yang, and NMBA's Janelle Pangilinan pose for a photo during the awards ceremony of the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

LEIGH GASES

From left, NMBA's Nate Guerrero, second place in the U17 boys doubles Danielle Mulinyawe and Evan Seguritan, first place Marlon Bautista and Sernantie Jimenez, and NMBA's Janelle Pangilinan pose for a photo during the awards ceremony of the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Young shuttlers Shaina Malonzo and Marlon Bautista bagged U17 singles championships in their respective divisions in the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 last weekend at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

In the last day of games last Saturday, Malonzo in the girls division went up against fellow junior national team teammate Genelyn Lansangan and bested her after three tough sets.

Lansangan put her best foot forward in the first set and won, 21-19. But Malonzo squared up with Lansangan and a heated battle for a third set ensued. They were evenly matched with both not wanting to waver and give up the upper hand, but Malonzo got the crucial point in the end, 21-20, to force a tie breaker.

In the final set, Malonzo learned from her mistakes, but Lansangan was right behind her. Both have played with and against each other for some time prior to the championships so their skill level was evenly

See SHAINA on Page 15

1 gold, 2 silver for Antonette, 1 gold for Devine at Guam National Champs

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Weightlifters Antonette Labausa, left, and Devine Pua pose with their gold medals during the 2024 Guam National Championships in Guam last Saturday.

Weightlifters Antonette Labausa and Devine Pua showcased the strength of women during the 2024 Guam National Championships in Guam last Saturday by hauling in medals during their stint.

Labausa, the 2024 Micronesian Games flagbearer and multi-awarded weightlifter, racked up one gold medal and two silver medals in her 86-kg weight class, while Pua claimed gold in the 63-kg category.

In the snatch portion, Labausa's first attempt of 70 kg was successful, and her second attempt of 73 kg was also completed. She did not complete her last attempt of 75 kg. In the clean & jerk lift, her first attempt of 90 kg was

See GUAM on Page 15

Marlins upset Dodgers; Delos Santos, Cruz lead stats race

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Marlins got the better of the top of the food chain Dodgers, 15-13, in the continuation of the 2024 Saipan Baseball League Masters League last Tuesday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

LEIGH GASES

Dodgers pitcher Geoffrey Cruz throws a pitch during one of their games in the 2024 Saipan Baseball League Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

The Marlins reeled in their first victory of the season for a 1-3 record, and handed the Dodgers their first loss for a 3-1 tally.

The third inning was the game-changer for the Marlins as they crossed the plate eight times from back-to-back runs. After that onslaught, they led 10-6.

The Dodgers is not the top team for nothing though as they bounced back and scored three in the fourth inning from their top three batters—Geoffrey Cruz, Derek Aguon, and Glenn Camacho to get within one, 9-10.

But while the Marlins were shut down in the fourth, they scored two runs in the fifth to add some cushion to

See MARLINS on Page 15